commonweal

The Editors
FANTASY & MYTH
David R. Carlin, Jr.
NUNS & POLITICS

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CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY ISSUE

HANS KUNG
Dying with Christian dignity

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James Tunstead Burtchaell
A new pastoral method of theology

Cornel West
Liberation theologies, what now?

Pheme Perkins
Introducing New Testament

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Correspondence

I think, therefore IBM

Barstow, Calif.

To the Editors: I just read the review of *War Games* by Tom O'Brien in the Sept. 9 issue. Though the author protested against such delusion, to me it still reflected the currently socially certified mind boggle over the humanity of computers. I'm a little weary of making something out of nothing. Stop me if I'm wrong. The question of the computer is simply a question of how much of man's soul can be routinized. The only mystery is the mystery of looking at our own thought processes, as aped and reconstructed with machine precision, and watching them work faster than we could possibly make them work ourselves. Their only real mystery is speed, in their mimicking idiocy. But taking routine procedures and letting machines do them faster is nothing new. It is what the Industrial Revolution was all about, I believe. This now includes the routine things the mind can do as well as the hands, in computerization: the split second repetition of the sequential logical construct of an exterior phenomenon. There is a logical construct out there and we can make a machine to repeat it flawlessly. Hooray.

I'm frankly a bit tired of winking, sneezing, fornicating, traitorous computers. Aren't there enough problems that need the best of man's authentically mysterious dimension of thinking without deliberately confusing ourselves to relieve the boredom by shrinking from the humanity of computers? I have no problem accepting computers as machines, just as adding machines or alarm clocks, a bit more complicated of course, but the same genre. Let's cut out the corn.

RUSS COLE

No pro-nuclear secret

Vienna, Va.

To the Editors: There are a number of points in William Lanouette's response to my criticism of his review of the McCracken book *The War Against the Atom* that call for redress (Oct. 7). However, the first two are personal in nature, and to them I take strong exception.

Lanouette falsely asserts that "although he doesn't say so, Mark Mills served as McCracken's technical adviser for this book." Over the years that Mr. McCracken spent writing and researching the book I chatted with him and provided him with information and directed him to other experts on numerous occasions — a service, I might add, that I have also performed for Lanouette in his capacity as a journalist on a number of occasions. I was not asked to provide a technical review in advance of publication. It was only *after* the book was published that I discovered, and was flattered, to find mention of my name among others in the acknowledgments.

Lanouette also claims that "in his haste to praise and defend a book that presents the 'other side' of the nuclear debate, Mills betrays his own attachments — to McCracken and the pro-nuclear vision he advocates." There has never been a secret about my support for commercial nuclear energy in my work with the press, my writings or public appearances. Given the overwhelming preponderance of anti-nuclear books for the general readers, it is noteworthy to find a well-written pro-nuclear one especially since numerous studies continue to verify the fact that the majority of scientists are "pro-nuclear."

MARK P. MILLS

Abortion alternatives

Tulsa, Okla.

To the Editors: In your October 21 issue, Mary Beth Gordon described the sad experience of taking a friend to the hospital for an abortion she did not want. Ms. Gordon describes how her companion sought the abortion at the urging of friends who convinced her that she had *no choice*. What a profoundly sad and troubling irony! Can it be that we have traveled so far down the abortion road that to be "pro-choice" now really means to offer life as an alternative to abortion?

Please ask Ms. Gordon to contact "Birthright" and "Catholic Charities" *now* to learn about alternatives that will be available, if she is ever again in a position to help a friend who has a problem pregnancy. Ms. Gordon will learn that in or near her community there are real friends who will demonstrate that there is an alternative choice to abortion. In those agencies she will find compassionate people who will provide the material and moral supports that the troubled woman needs. She will find that they also will arrange for the newborn "unwanted" baby to be adopted by a solid, loving family, if that is what the woman wants.

Finally, please suggest to Ms. Gordon that she could be a genuine friend to troubled women by using her impressive writing skills to pass on *good news*. There still are places in our society where a pregnant woman hungry for help will be offered the "bread" of love and life instead of the "stone" of death.

(DR.) EDWARD L. MAILLET
Executive Director
Catholic Charities

Not light decisions

Kansas City, Mo.

To the Editors: The article, "Nobody wants an abortion," (Oct. 21) is one of the best I have read on this controversial subject. Mary Beth Gordon has managed, through dramatization, to give an inside view of the sad dilemma "unwanted" pregnancy presents. The public needs to be more aware of the fact that it is the woman with a serious problem who seeks abortion as an answer and that the decision to abort is never made lightly.

(Continued on page 63)

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commonweal

FANTASY, THEOLOGY, & MYSTICISM

IS THE "DISGODDING" of nature Wordsworth once lamented currently in reverse gear? It might appear so and where better to take note of it than in this Contemporary Theology issue? For over a decade now, a cultural trend has been abroad in the land; it might be called the return of enchantment. Myth and mysticism are enjoying a comeback. Look at the literary scene; even Norman Mailer, with *Egyptian Evenings*, is on to it. But so are "hard" scientists: subatomic accelerators and interstellar space probes give rise to cosmological theory that reads like Alice in Wonderland. And somewhat disingenuously, Carl Sagan brings us myth under cover of extraterrestrial intelligence. Some cultural observers are not amused; they find the trend ominous. Take, for sample, Kathleen Agena, a contributing editor of *Partisan Review*, writing in a recent (Nov. 27) *New York Times Magazine*. "Our desire for fantasy and science fiction," went the magazine's introductory caption, " . . . is scary." Ms. Agena is sure that such archaism, which she fastens without qualification on the European Middle Ages, is bound to be socially and politically regressive. For as every card-bearing Enlightenment liberal knows (and scholars of a twelfth-century Renaissance apparently do not), *real* history began only in the seventeenth century; the term "medieval" stands for obscurantist darkness, a fixed social hierarchy, and authoritarianism. Ms. Agena has one good thing to say for myth: it distinguishes between good and evil. Mysticism, she blithely asserts, "evades the riddle of good and evil, aspiring to offer a coherent world view by blurring the hard edges of reality with vague notions of oneness." This will come as news to John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila, and not less so to their modern counterparts, Buber, Hammarskjöld, and Merton. The fact is that for all these jay-walkers of hard edges, the figure of an angel with blazing sword barred a return to the kind of primordial unity Ms. Agena probably objects to.

Just whom or what is Ms. Agena's jeremiad directed against? One can hardly tell. Her examples of the trend range across the cultural landscape: space-age fairy tales like *Star Wars*, the Tolkien trilogy, Frank Herbert's "Dune" novels, Doris Lessing's science fiction and Joyce Carol Oates's romances, the so-called Neo-Romantic movement in music and the representational style of Neo-Expressionism in painting, finally ending up with the tendency of even mainline religion to reemphasize biblical imagery and story. The whole undifferentiated lot, Ms. Agena brands with suspicion. In her dismay one can almost hear Freud exhorting Jung to adhere to psychoanalytic dogma "against the black tide of occultism" (by which he meant, according to Jung, "virtually everything that philosophy and religion, including . . . contemporary parapsychology, had learned about the psyche").

Admittedly, the contemporary hunger for wonders deserves a dose of skeptical salt, and nothing merits closer scrutiny than the state of the nation's imagination. The "Dune" books are filled with wonders, but the wonders are those of dualistic

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consciousness's run-away paranoia. Yet the re-enchantment of the cosmos cannot be dismissed by the hackneyed dogma that an appreciation of myth or the mystic path is evidence of moral weakness or a refusal to grow up. In a thin time, rather, it may represent the search for vertical depth, vital spirit, self-transcendence. A culture's wealth consists, after all, of its stock of mythical stories, which, as the Renaissance demonstrated, prime our creative juices just when apocalypse impends. It is one thing to fear that Han Solo's macho theatrics and Luke Skywalker's plastic naiveté disguise the Manicheanism that currently governs Washington's relations with Moscow; it is quite another for Ms. Agena to indiscriminately zap the noncombatant tin robots and androids into which, paradoxically, we have poured soulful virtue and heart. The choice is not between a sterile, bureaucratic reason (with unquestioned goals) and myth. It is a choice of which goal-setting myths we choose to live by — since, whatever the case, live or perish by them we do.

The current unbidden irruption of fantasy and mythicizing is, as Ms. Agena notes, the compensatory side of the West's cultural crisis, that is, a search for alternatives to the mythically proportioned "givens" of modernity now in a state of collapse: a mechanical cosmology, the almighty self, and the myth of Progress. It is the disintegration of this mythic complex so long taken for "reity" that, consciously or not, leaves so many feeling unanchored, adrift in a void. And it is this cultural vacancy which draws parallels from historians to the fourteenth century and the late Roman empire, out-of-joint, fluid periods in which, of course, mysticism flourished. Indeed, such a vacuum *is* perilous. Those lacking cultural roots, community bonds, and usable skills will be especially susceptible to demagogic political and religious leaders offering "simplistic, fairy-tale views." As Milan Kundera put it, at such a time many are lured by utopian voices into a paradise "only to find, when the doors slam shut behind them, that they are in hell." All this is bitterly true.

On the other hand, mysticism appeals in a period like this because its traditions offer a *discipline* and a rich critical literature of experimental wisdom for charting one's way through the void — to new worlds. As Louis Dupré argued in *Daedalus* a year ago, the believer today "shares in fact, if not in principle, the practical atheism of his entire culture." Hence, he or she "is left no choice but to vitalize this negative experience and to confront [the] feeling of God's absence" — which may, with wit, put one on the path of the *Cloud of Unknowing* and Meister Eckhart. "What was once the arduous route traveled only by a religious elite is now, in many instances, the only one still open . . . it is a desert that in prayerful attention may be converted into the solitude of contemplation — a solitude that Thomas Merton wrote of as not something outside us, not an absence of men or of sound, but an abyss opening up in the center of the soul, an abyss created by a hunger and thirst and sorrow and poverty and desire."

Ours is not a time for wishful *thinking* grounded in shop-worn assumptions. But it just may be a time for wishful *contemplation,* and there's a difference.

ETC.

Talking politics with our friend Amelia is always bracing. It is always frustrating as well. Amelia — and that is not her real name — works for a corporation that has extensive interactions with the government, and company protocol strongly discourages employees from putting their personal political opinions in print. Nonetheless, when Jesse Jackson scored his big success on the road to Damascus, Amelia was provoked into writing down her reactions. She sent us the following:

"Jesse Jackson has, in a very short time, made himself the most interesting person — and issue — in the 1984 presidential election. It seems Mr. Jackson is one of those people destined to arouse strong feelings, and I confess to having such feelings — in both directions.

"Without question, Mr. Jackson is a fine preacher. Over the years, he has moved black — and white — audiences all over America to chant 'I *am* somebody.' His frequent emphasis on black self-reliance has been a welcome antidote to some of the worst tendencies in both liberal and conservative thought. As a black, Mr. Jackson has been free to tell black audiences what many white liberals were afraid to say: That in the face of racism, discrimination, and injustice, individuals remain free moral agents. Individuals are responsible for their own actions: they make their own history, even if they do so within circumstances not of their own choosing. 'Even though I may be on welfare, I *am* somebody,' Jesse Jackson would shout to his crowds, and they would shout back. One of the most pernicious ideas fostered by at least some liberals is that a person who grows up in circumstances of deprivation should automatically be absolved of responsibility for his or her sins. This liberal mistake is often based on a genuine insight: that poverty breeds despair, lawlessness, and failure. But too often, compassion turns into pity, pity into condescension and disrespect. Jesse Jackson has fought against that tendency in liberalism, and I, for one, am grateful.

"Beyond that, he has called the bluff of many conservatives who contend that support for the welfare state, for 'programs for the poor,' is inconsistent with a belief in individual responsibility. The Reverend Jackson has made clear that believing we are responsible for ourselves does not preclude being responsible for each other. Moreover, many conservatives have tried to blame blacks for their own powerlessness. 'They have the vote but they don't turn out,' has been the conservative refrain. Jackson — and many, many workaday black politicians — have been working hard to make that conservative canard (dare I use a Nixonian term?) 'inoperative.' By his very candidacy, Jackson has given many young black Americans new reason to shout, 'I *am* somebody!'

"All this to his credit. And yet I harbor doubts. Even Mr. Jackson's bold triumph in winning the release of the prisoner of war Robert Goodman raises questions about just what Jackson the man and the candidate is up to. To be sure, everyone must rejoice when someone is released from captivity. And the notion that an individual can accomplish some-

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thing that a government cannot has much appeal, especially to a country as individualist as ours. The action may even have created new opportunities for peace in the region. President Reagan chose to react by welcoming Mr. Jackson's mission and Syria's action. Once again, Ronald Reagan proved himself an adept politician — and perhaps even someone with an occasional flare for statesmanship.

"Yet Mr. Jackson has allowed himself to be used by the Syrian government — or worse, tried to use a foreign power to pursue his own interests in American politics. America's policy in the Middle East has many shortcomings, but surely our government's desire to have the Syrian regime withdraw its troops from Lebanon is not one of them. Mr. Jackson seemed ready to play Syria's game, to make Syrian President Assad — a man responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of his own citizens — look like a humanitarian.

"Which brings me to the broader question about Jesse Jackson: what does he hope to get out of his campaign, other than a lot of attention? Mr. Jackson's supporters — sometimes subtly, sometimes not — argue that the question itself is racist. Why not ask the same of Gary Hart or Reubin Askew or Fritz Hollings, all of whom are running behind Jackson in the polls? The reason is contained in the question itself: Hart, Askew, and Hollings are all ambitious politicians who make no special claims other than that they would be good presidents. Jesse Jackson, on the other hand, has never held public office and has been explicit in saying that his candidacy has been propelled by the welcome and extraordinary rise in black political participation. Mr. Jackson is a self-confessed crusader, and he should be judged by how his management of the crusade will affect the people on whom his legitimacy rests.

"Here I have many doubts, and so do many of America's leading black political figures, including Andrew Young and Coretta King. In the past, Mr. Jackson has shown himself to be quite ready to do whatever would bring him attention, regardless of the consequences. His performance during the conflict between blacks and Jews following Andrew Young's resignation as UN ambassador was certainly no example of responsibility. Instead of trying to heal the breach between blacks and Jews — two groups that particularly know the meaning of suffering — Mr. Jackson flew off to embrace Yassir Arafat. Mr. Jackson did more than criticize Israel: at a very sensitive time, his ill-considered gesture managed to drive a wedge between blacks and Jews — providing fodder, I might add, to those elements in the Jewish community most eager to see blacks and Jews estranged.

"I also wonder about Mr. Jackson's readiness to attack the rules of the Democratic party and to criticize the leaders of organized labor.

"The new Democratic rules strike me as fundamentally sensible. If the Democratic party in 1968 was too closed to outside challenges, the Democratic party by 1976 was an organization so open to manipulation that an inexperienced outsider could seize the nomination, even while losing many late primaries. Under the new rules, the primaries remain paramount. But the Democrats have been right in trying to give more influence to elected political leaders — those regularly accountable to the people — and in giving a premium to better-known and more tested candidates. Jesse Jackson says he opposes the rules because they discriminate against blacks; I suspect his real reason for opposing them is that they make Jesse Jackson's life more difficult.

"As for organized labor, Mr. Jackson is certainly right in pointing to past discriminatory practices. But if ever there was a time when the unions needed support from friends of the poor and opponents of injustice, this is it. I will give him this: Mr. Jackson is not an ideologue opposed to unions on principle; he is a presidential candidate angry at the unions for supporting Walter Mondale.

"All this said, Mr. Jackson himself holds the key to whether or not his crusade will serve the people for whom he claims to speak: black Americans in particular, the dispossessed more generally. Many black leaders worry, and I do too, that Mr. Jackson will so personalize his cause that when he loses the Democratic nomination, as is likely, he will encourage many blacks — particularly the young — to lose heart and slip away from politics. After what Harold Washington and Wilson Goode and Mel King — and Jesse Jackson — have done to combat black feelings of powerlessness, this would represent a grave disservice to black America.

"Still I'm optimistic, perhaps more than this sounds. According to Mr. Jackson's supporters, the best thing about the Jackson campaign is that it will give focus to the black political mobilization. They insist that Mr. Jackson knows what he is doing, and that the last thing he wants to do is see black America slouch away from the polls. And they contend that if liberals believe what they claim to believe, the last thing they should do is begrudge the candidacy of a man who is trying to prove that black aspirations do not have to be expressed through white politicians.

"So despite a great many doubts, I wish Mr. Jackson luck in doing good by doing well. He has a grave responsibility to millions of Americans who want to shout 'I *am* somebody,' and mean it."

EDITOR WANTED

Commonweal will be seeking an additional editor sometime in early spring. The position would involve writing, editing, working with authors, and numerous routine production tasks, much of this done under pressure and in a stimulating but spartan environment. There is some flexibility in regard to the starting date.

Applicants should be Roman Catholic lay women or men with wide cultural and political interests and knowledge. A demonstrated talent for lively, incisive writing is essential; some editorial experience is preferred. Four-day work week but modest salary. Applications by mail only. Applicants should include full curriculum vitae or resumé, writing samples, and a letter describing themselves and their interest in *Commonweal*. All applications will be considered confidential and given careful attention.

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Rhode Island

FACING THE CANONS

TWO SISTERS SEEK OFFICE

THE SISTERS OF MERCY are at it again. First there was Theresa Kane. Then in 1983 it was Agnes Mansour in Michigan. Now it's Arlene Violet and Liz Morancy in Rhode Island.

In 1982 Sister Arlene Violet — a Mercy sister for over two decades and a lawyer — was the Republican candidate for Rhode Island attorney general. Bishop of Providence Louis E. Gelineau issued a statement saying the candidacy was in violation of the canon law prohibiting clerics from political activity. Violet argued that the canon was ambiguous and that it wasn't clear "clerics" was meant to include nuns. The bishop made no further statements, and no punitive action was taken against her. Although defeated, her showing was deemed a respectable one, and Republican leaders soon began predicting a rerun in 1984.

Last November, however, the revised code of canon law went into effect, and the ambiguities Arlene Violet had hung her hat on earlier disappeared. Religious as well as priests were prohibited from seeking office.

There remained the exceedingly slender possibility that Bishop Gelineau might exercise his right to dispense her from the prohibition. But in a public statement on January 5, 1984 the bishop killed that last hope. Anticipating this, Violet had earlier commenced the process of seeking dispensation from her vows. Her plan is to resign from the Sisters of Mercy before formally declaring her candidacy and then, once her political career is over, to rejoin. The bishop takes a dim view of this de facto leave of absence, rejecting the concept that a religious could "abandon that life 'temporarily' to serve in a public office."

Arlene Violet has an aggressive legal and political style, which has won her the (probably sexist) nicknames of "Arlene Violent" and "Attila the Nun." But this style, combined with her demonstrated talent and much more ample campaign funds than she had in 1982, will make her a serious contender in November.

If Violet's situation is the more interesting from the point of view of state politics, Sister Elizabeth Morancy's situation is far more interesting from the point of view of ecclesiastical politics. Morancy is forty-two years old, a Sister of Mercy from the age of 18, a former teacher, currently a social worker among Hmong refugees in Providence, and one of *Time* magazine's "Fifty Faces for the Future" in a 1979 feature story on America's leaders. Completing her third term as a Democratic member of the Rhode Island House of Representatives, she has concentrated on issues concerning women, minorities, and poor people, attempting, as she puts it, "to make private pain a public issue." Her intention is to run for reelection this year without either seeking dispensation from the canonical prohibition or resigning from the Sisters of Mercy.

Morancy, described by a local newspaper as being "sweet as molasses and tough as nails," candidly admits that she will be in clear violation of canon law. She is prepared to commit civil (or should it be called "ecclesiastical"?) disobedience in order to defend what she calls the "validity of the political ministry." She contends that the prohibition on public-office-seeking by religious is a retreat from the principles of Vatican II and Pope Paul VI's 1971 encyclical, *A Call to Action*.

She emphatically disagrees with canon law when it says the status of priests and religious entails "separation from the world." Christianity, she argues, often requires intense involvement on the part of religious in worldly affairs. Her view implies, as she readily acknowledges, an abolition of the qualitative distinction Pope John Paul II seems bent on enforcing — the distinction between clerics (including religious) and laity, between consecrated persons and secular persons.

Here, I think, is the fundamental issue in the Morancy case. Can religion — which the classic French sociologist Durkheim once defined as "having to do with sacred things, that is, things set apart and forbidden" — survive and flourish without a class of sacred persons, that is, persons who are "set apart and forbidden"? The testimony of history seems to be that it cannot. But Liz Morancy, mindful that history isn't finished yet and that it may someday submit some different testimony, bets otherwise and is staking her very self on it.

DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.

(David R. Carlin, Jr., is a Rhode Island state senator who teaches sociology at the University of Rhode Island.)

Washington report

THE PRIMARY QUESTION

WHO'S ON FIRST?

IT'S OFFICIAL: Ronald Reagan is running for reelection. On December 21, to meet state filing deadlines, Mr. Reagan signed papers certifying that he intends to seek the Republican nomination for president in the Illinois and New Hampshire primaries.

So why hasn't your newspaper run the story? It may have, but the item was probably buried as it was in the *New York Times*, in the middle of the paper — next to Andy Griffith calling upon us to relax with the "new" AT & T. White House and campaign officials claimed that this certification was "to keep his options open" and that it did not preclude the possibility that Reagan could remove himself later from the presidential race. Mr. Reagan's wish is that the country wait until his

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COMING: Has Guatemala invented a new form of totalitarianism? Two reports.

formal declaration on January 29, and the press seems to be going along with his "suspenseful" scenario. Of course, there is always the possibility that he could remove himself from consideration after he formally declares his candidacy before the klieg lights.

Press secretary James Lake of Reagan-Bush '84, the reelection organization, said of the president: "In his view, he is not a candidate until he stands up before the American people and says he is a candidate." Declaring that he is a candidate to the citizens of Illinois and New Hampshire apparently is insufficient for Mr. Reagan; Barbara Walters and John Chancellor must also be included. It brings to mind the irony that candidate and candid have the same Latin root.

This mildly annoying situation does underscore the close relationship between sundry state election laws and state party rules and campaign strategies, and more important, the relationship between the presidential nominating process and the media.

The Republican nominating process already began, in fact, with the election of Arizona and Arkansas Republican committee members in September 1982. The committee members are participants in the selection process for their states' delegates to the 1984 Republican convention. Before Reagan's January 29 formal declaration, the Republican nominating process will be well on its way. Michigan's Republican county conventions select delegates on January 11, and North Dakota's Republican delegates will be chosen through a caucus procedure the first step of which will take place between January 15 and March 15. Hawaii's Republicans are presently scheduled to hold their delegate selection precinct meetings on January 24, and Iowa's Republican precinct caucuses will be held on January 19.

Iowa is the first state to get the campaign rolling for the Democrats. Its precinct caucuses have, of course, been the subject of increasing media attention — of political benefit to George McGovern in '72 and '80 and to Jimmy Carter in '76. Carter also achieved victory in Iowa's 1980 caucuses but at a much higher cost; whereas the earlier contests were sparsely attended (40,000 in '76), Kennedy's challenge gained such attention that 100,000 Democrats showed up at the caucuses (30,000 more than expected by the Kennedy camp, almost all of whom came out to vote against him). This turnout exceeded the participation rate in a number of primaries in 1980 — four states had a combined party participation of less than 15 percent of their voting age population. An even higher turnout is predicted this February for Iowa's 550,000 registered Democrats (and for any other voters willing to register as Democrats at the caucuses) — thus meriting the description of Iowa's caucus system as a primary in disguise.

Of course, this ever growing participation rate is due to the increasing media coverage given to Iowa's kickoff status for the Democrats. This status is seen by the Iowa state Democrats as in jeopardy and has been an increasing point of friction with the Democratic National Committee (DNC).

Following the mandate of the 1980 national convention, a Commission on Presidential Nominations, chaired by North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt, Jr., suggested changes in the delegate selection process that were approved by the Democratic midterm conference in June 1982. Among these was a restriction of delegate selection to the period between the second Tuesday in March and the first Tuesday in June. Two exceptions were granted for Iowa and New Hampshire — in direct recognition of their coveted roles in leading the party's nominating contests — which would allow Iowa to hold its precinct caucuses on February 27, and New Hampshire to conduct its primary on March 6, 1984.

Complications arose when neighboring states attempted to get part of the media attention, and the not inconsequential political benefits, that have for so long been New Hampshire's reward for having the nation's first primary. Maine has scheduled its municipal caucuses (by both parties) for March 4. Although this date does not conform to the national Democratic delegate selection rules, the DNC has approved the change in recognition of Maine's one hundred-and-fifty-year history of town meetings held to select presidential convention delegates. Moreover, Vermont, not to be outdone, has scheduled an advisory presidential preference primary for March 6. As a result, the Republican-controlled New Hampshire legislature, pointing to a law which holds, in part, that its primary be scheduled on the Tuesday immediately preceding a similar election in any other state, moved its primary date to February 28. Iowa Democrats, in turn, noting that national party rules allow them to schedule their precinct caucuses eight days before New Hampshire, have moved their date to February 20.

The DNC so far has been steadfast in refusing to recognize the new dates and in attempting to hold the state parties to the national party's rules. Matters are complicated by the "memorandum of understanding" signed by the six Democratic candidates in October (Reubin Askew declined and Jesse Jackson was not in the race at the time) that they would participate in the Iowa caucus on February 20 and the New Hampshire primary February 28. DNC Chairman Charles T. Manatt had designated party treasurer Paul G. Kirk to find a way out of the impasse. His recommendation was that the Democratic Executive Committee reverse itself and approve the earlier dates by January 1. As of this writing, the DNC has not altered its opposition to the date change.

The Executive Committee of the DNC will meet on January 20 and no doubt will discuss the matter further; but it appears unlikely that the Iowa/New Hampshire date dispute will be resolved before the January 20 meeting — at the earliest. To add to the pressures, a Rule 19(c) committee (to run an alternative delegate system in non-complying states) has been appointed and is organizing. This committee would have been formed in any case, but its establishment emphasizes the potential seriousness of the situation.

The Democratic Executive Committee's upcoming deliberations were even further complicated when Chairman Manatt

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agreed to allow Jesse Jackson to present his demands for changes in the delegates selection rules. Claiming discrimination, Jackson is particularly seeking to alter the Hunt Commission's "threshold" requirement that a certain percentage of the vote be won, usually twenty percent, before delegates are allotted in proportion to the candidate's share of the vote. Jackson is also protesting the so-called "winner-take-all" or "loophole" rule that is being used in seven important states — which allows a candidate, in effect, to gain all the delegates from a congressional district if the delegates running under his or her name receive a plurality of the votes.

Obviously these rules aid and abet front-runners — notably Mr. Mondale — and Jackson's questioning of the legitimacy of the delegate selection rules are no doubt motivated by his long-shot position at this point. However, given the momentum from his success in obtaining Syrian release of Lt. Robert Goodman, his presentation to the Executive Committee will undoubtedly pose the most formidable challenge yet faced in the Democratic party's attempt to constrain the fractionalization of the delegate selection process.

THE DEMOCRATIC efforts to centralize and maintain party control of the nominating process stems, in part, from a reaction to the 1972 and 1976 national conventions (just as the democratizing reforms of the McGovern/Fraser Commission were a reaction to the 1968 convention which had nominated a candidate, Hubert Humphrey, who had not won a single primary). Democratic party regulars felt a need to rectify the party rules which made possible the 1972 convention's high proportion of delegates with unrepresentative stances on specific issues and low commitment to the party and the 1976 selection of a candidate who was independent of formal party organizations and thereby suffered a consequent loss of political accountability. This situation had been compounded by the media's highlighting early primary and caucus winners, drowning the voices of the competition in the blare of a bandwagon that may play well all the way to the convention floor but which gets quite tired by election day and is finally too exhausted to cover the distance between the White House and the Capitol.

Overall, this concern reflected the simple conclusion of many Democrats that the presidential nominating process was taking just too long a time. Many Democrats hope that that their three-month "window" for delegate selection — even with exceptions for Iowa and New Hampshire — will lower the considerable costs of extended contests. But this has also had the apparently unanticipated consequence of "front loading" the 1984 nominating process. "Super-Tuesday," March 13, will have six primaries and four caucuses and provide the side benefit of preventing the networks from focusing on a single state's election. By the end of March over forty percent of the delegates will be selected.

"Long-shot" candidates such as Jesse Jackson see the obvious advantage to the front-runners (who will have the resources to cover all the races) and are doing what they can to curtail that advantage. But as the clock continues to tick, it will be increasingly hard to change the rules of the game — particularly given the interrelationship of primaries and state laws.

Some may find it amusing that the "anti-reform" Republicans, by leaving their state parties the maximum local choice, are left with 35 primaries providing 78 percent of the Republican delegates. The Democrats, having reformed their reform's reform, are back to 26 primaries furnishing 63 percent of the delegate total. Although the number of Democratic delegates selected on the basis of presidential primaries has been diminished from 1980 (by about 71 percent), these delegates are still the preponderant factor in the national convention. The question remains among party regulars whether participation in primaries will continue to be dominated by (in the words of political scientist V.O. Key) a "caricature" of the general electorate — primary voters approach issues differently from and are demographically less representative of the general electorate, as well as of the Democratic rank-and-file.

Writing one of a series of good essays on the presidential nominating system that appeared in the Fall '83 issue of the American Political Science Association's journal, Robert Nakamura has observed that the Democratic reforms have been in part a response to, rather than a source of, declining strength in party voter identification, instability of party coalition, and increases in issue-based movements. Politics now center on attracting voters weakly attached to party "rather than mobilizing the party faithful." He notes further that the task of the Democrats is to mobilize the "weakly attached" who vote for the party in order to advance other goals (e.g., those with strong racial or ethnic identities voting to enhance group interests, or persons with material ties to programs such as the elderly or teachers) rather than out of party loyalty.

But this task, in turn, points to the dilemma long ago enunciated by Nelson Polsby and Aaron Wildavsky *(Presidential Elections*, Sixth Edition, 1984): namely, that the Democratic party's nominating process has emphasized far too much the useful function of advancing the interest of factions at the cost of consensus-building. The inherent tension in the dual role of political parties is brought to the fore: whether the purpose is expression of various shades of opinions, with party rules shaped to optimize differences, or governing the nation, with the rules established to optimize cohesion. Polsby and Wildavsky rightly point out that the issue is one of proportion, but conclude: "As our system is presently structured, the danger is that expressiveness will overwhelm effectiveness."

Many Democrats, still feeling the bruises of the Carter presidency, would probably agree that this assessment applies particularly to their party. The present built-in need of contenders to express their candidacy in terms of job security, nuclear freeze, feminism, or racism does not lend itself readily to a cohesive public policy. The lingering Democratic fear is that the electorate will also come to see the Democrats emphasizing "expressiveness" to the detriment of effectiveness — and vote Republican.

JEREMIAH BARUCH

(Jeremiah Baruch is the pseudonym of a Washington writer with a position in goverment.)

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Church/world watch

What's needed in Lebanon

J. Bryan Hehir

PRESIDENT Reagan came to office committed to reverse the "Vietnam syndrome" in foreign policy; but in the last week of 1983 the president was confronted by a version of the syndrome from an unexpected source. It came not from the political left but from the Pentagon. A Defense Department Commission of Inquiry ("The Long Commission"), composed principally of active and retired military officers, faulted the military chain of command for the October 23 attack on the marines in Beirut, but its strongest criticism was a surprisingly severe indictment of administration policy in Lebanon. Ironically, the charge these military professionals laid at the administration's door was an overemphasis on military measures and a failure to use diplomatic means more creatively in pursuing U.S. objectives in Lebanon.

In the voice of the commission one could hear the echo of Vietnam. The military establishment was sending an early warning that it did not want to be saddled with another assignment doomed from the outset to frustration and failure. The president preempted both the Pentagon report and a similar assessment from the House of Representatives by assuming personal responsibility for failures in command. But the key questions went beyond those of personal responsibility to the very foundations of the policy.

The policy debate must reach beyond Lebanon to the issues of U.S. policy in the Middle East, for Lebanon today is a microcosm of the region. It exemplifies the fusion of religious and political forces which combine to give the Middle East a uniquely volatile character. In addition, eight years of civil strife have drawn into Lebanon all the major actors in the larger Mideast drama: Israel and Syria now occupy significant parts of Lebanon, and the Palestinians' saga has permeated the years of war — they came, they almost established a parallel state within the Lebanese society, and now they have been expelled for the second time.

The Long Commission's stress on diplomatic means to address the Lebanese problem is undoubtedly correct, but decidedly at odds with present policy. Present policy is preeminently a military presence which is increasingly difficult to explain and exceedingly dangerous to maintain. Policy-makers seem little impressed by the intricacies of regional politics and faith and mesmerized by the geopolitical meaning of the Middle East. At one point recently the president explained both his Lebanon and Grenada policies by a single sentence about resisting the Soviet Union. The geopolitical concern may fit better in the Middle East than in Central America, but it fails to explain either. To follow the solid advice of the Long Commission by stressing the diplomatic option requires thinking through U.S. policy in the region piece by piece.

The *U.S.-Israel* relationship reached a new and decisive stage in late November when President Reagan and Prime Minister Shamir announced an agreement on "strategic cooperation." This is the closest the U.S. and Israel have come to a formal alliance and it provoked substantial opposition in the Arab world. Ironically enough, the strategic agreement could be used to clarify U.S. policy in the Middle East and set limits on Israel's plans for the region. The function of an alliance is to make explicit and formal a pre-existing mutuality of interest among nations. In the Middle East, U.S. and Israeli interests converge but they are not congruent. The strategic cooperation agreement should be used to define how far the common interest extends and to indicate where it stops. Those who fear the agreement is a U.S. blank check for Israel should be the first to press the question of the limits of the accord and the tradeoffs to be expected from it. Since the U.S. is objectively committed to the existence and welfare of Israel, formalizing that commitment simply clarifies the situation. What needs more discussion is the price of the agreement for both sides. The U.S. supplies both political and psychological support through it; it should then press those areas where "accord" does not exist: settlements on the West Bank, the Palestinian question, and Israel's role in Lebanon.

The *U.S.-Arab* relationship is also one of a convergence but not a congruence of interest. The Arab reaction to the strategic accord with Israel and to the Lebanese-Israel agreement of last May was generated by a view that the U.S. had defined its interests unilaterally (i.e. with Israel) in the Middle East. The Long Commission said such a perception also transformed the Arab view of the role of the Marines in Beirut, from peacekeepers to partisans explicitly on the side of Mr. Gemayel and, implicitly, of Israel.

Faced with this perception the United States must define its areas of common interest with Arab states and demonstrate that its policy is cast in terms of some convergence with Arab objectives in the region. The president's peace proposals of September 1982 were a useful beginning, but they are precisely the diplomatic measures which have been pushed aside by the Lebanon policy.

The links between the larger questions and U.S. choices in Lebanon are direct and decisive. If Lebanon cannot be "resolved" apart from a regional diplomatic initiative, then such a joint resolution must now be formulated anew. This means Lebanon is not primarily a test of military will power

(Continued on page 62)

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IS IT POSSIBLE TO DIE A WHOLLY DIFFERENT DEATH?

Dying with Christian dignity

HANS KÜNG

WE CAN HAVE no illusions about our own behavior at death. In this connection Gertrud von Le Fort's novella "The Song at the Scaffold" always comes to mind. This describes how in the midst of the revolutionary events in Paris the Carmelite nun Blanche de la Force first flees from the convent, because she cannot get rid of her fear of death, but then voluntarily follows the tumbril in which her sisters are going to their execution, and finally overcomes her fear and goes with them to a martyr's death.

It can be like that, but it can also be different. Someone who now talks bravely about death can be reduced to silence by fear at its actual onset. Those who think they are firm should take care lest they fall — theologians first of all. Every mortal being has his own wholly personal death to die, with its own particular burdens, fears, and hopes.

But ought there not to be today once more something like an *ars moriendi*, an "art of dying"? Certainly not in the style of those little books on dying, with this title, widely circulated in the great epidemics and the atmosphere of death of the late Middle Ages as a preparation for the moment of death, which in their illustrated editions depicted scenes of angels and devils in conflict at the deathbed. But perhaps there might be an *ars moriendi*, based on authentic Christian faith, which would not lead people to go "singing" to their death (as the Carmelites did in their longing for martyrdom), but which would enable the day of death to be understood — as was usual for the fourth century in the early church — certainly as *hemera genethlios*, as *dies natalis:* as the day of birth into a new, eternal life.

Yes, ought it not to be possible out of belief in God, out of belief in God's eternal life, in our — my — eternal life, to die a wholly different human death, a death with truly human dignity, in fact a *death with Christian dignity?* The Christian element here being understood not as an extra, a higher kind of drug, a superstructure, a mystification, but as a reinforcement, as a way of plumbing the depths of the human, which can reach down to and sustain even the unfathomable depths of the negative dark and fatal.

Or must it be said that what is possible to the stoic is not possible to the Christian? The Roman philosopher-emperor Marcus Aurelius, who held a stoic-pantheistic belief in a "universal nature," ends his unique "Communings with Himself": "What hardship then is there in being banished from the city, not by a tyrant or an unjust judge, but by Nature who settled thee in it? So might a praetor who commissions a comic actor, dismiss him from the stage. *But I have not played my five acts, but only three*. Very possibly, but in life three acts count as a full play. For he, that is responsible for thy composition originally, and thy dissolution now, decides when it is complete. But thou art responsible for neither. Depart then with a good grace, for he that dismisseth thee is gracious." This is the authentic stoic attitude.

Once more, should not what was possible to the stoic be possible also to the Christian? Should it not be possible to him who believes in something more than an all-begetting and all-engulfing universal nature, who believes in an absolutely last, absolutely first reality that we call life, good, love itself, that we may call the loving God and Father of mankind? Should it not be possible to the Christian who can see all that is human and all-too-human, his finite nature and infinite longings, in the light of that Crucified One who was taken up as the absolutely solitary and forsaken dying person by this living God and Father out of the darkness of death into his eternal life?

No, when it comes to dying, the Christian must not — like the stoic — suppress emotions, deny passions, put on an act of emotional coolness and composure. Jesus Christ did not die like a stoic in dispassionate serenity, as painlessly as possible, but in great torment with the cry of one forsaken by God. In face of this death the Christian need not deny his fear and trembling, but — with Jesus's fear of death behind him,

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FATHER HANS KÜNG *is the author of* Infallible?: An Inquiry, On Being a Christian, *and* Does God Exist? *The above article is excerpted from his forthcoming book,* Eternal Life?: Life After Death As a Medical, Philosophical, and Theological Problem *(English language translation copyright © 1984 by William Collins Sons Co., Ltd., and Doubleday & Co., Inc., published by Doubleday & Co., Inc.).*

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Jesus's cry still in his ear — he may be certain that this fear too and this trembling are encompassed by God who is love, are transformed into the freedom of the children of God. The attitude of the Christian to death will then in fact be the attitude to a death that has been transformed. As E. Jüngel puts it: "A death that has been deprived of power. Not that this can be seen in death itself. Its power still seems too great. The fact that death has been deprived of power, that it had to leave behind its sting in God, is an article of faith. Without faith then we can in fact only hate death — or simply be resigned to it. In faith on the other hand hatred of death is turned into mockery, and particularly in view of the bitterness of death. 'Scripture proclaims how one death devoured the other: death has been turned to mockery,' we hear in an Easter hymn of Luther. But this spiritual mockery is nothing but concrete trust in God. And it is not spiritual presumption only if it proves effective as care for life. Mocking at death means especially not allowing life to be mocked at."

FROM THE TIME when the sting was drawn out of death by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the message of eternal life in God, who proved his fidelity in Jesus Christ, has never ceased to be heard. From that time onward we have been able with reasonable confidence to rely on the fact that there is no depth of human existence, no guilt, no hardship, fear of death or forsakenness, that is not encompassed by a God who is always ahead of man, even in death. From then onward we have been able confidently to assume that we do not die into a darkness, into a void, a nothingness, but into a new existence, into the fullness, the *pleroma,* the light of a quite different day and that at the same time we do not have to achieve anything new, but only permit ourselves to be called, led, sustained. The Protestant theologian Heinrich Zahrnt rightly says: "Christian belief in eternal life follows quite logically from belief in the God proclaimed by Jesus Christ; it forms merely the perspective of the latter drawn out to infinity. When all the guarantees, supports and bridges break down by which we strive to secure our life, when we lose all the ground from under our feet and sink into complete unconsciousness, from which we can no longer relate to any of our fellow human beings and none of them can relate to us, then faith becomes total, then it is revealed as what it always is or should be by its very nature: *reliance on God alone* and consequently faith in life and death."

From this theological perspective death will in fact acquire a different place in the scale of values. Death will no longer be the brutal power of destruction, the extinguishing and breaking off of human possibilities. It will cease to be man's enemy, will not triumph over him at the end. Regarded theologically or — as the American Protestant theologian Langdon Gilkey says — "theonomously,""death shows its reality, power and meaning, but in pointing beyond itself to its own infinite ground, it is itself transcended and its negative annihilating power is withdrawn. Through death we transcend both life and death. Death can, therefore, be 'transparent' to the transcendent, to a divine power that is neither life nor is simply death."

Going on 60

From Commonweal fifty years ago: "We must never forget that belief in immortality is, despite all the efforts to derive it from rational hope in and analysis of human nature, essentially one of the gifts of Christ. This is one of the most extraordinary truths to be learned from Saint Paul, whose mind was so set aflame by the promise of deathlessness given by the Lord and by the corroborative evidence of the Resurrection that the issue of immortality is for him the very heart of the whole Christian problem. When he writes that faith is vain if Christ be not risen from the dead, he is thinking of the hopes and responsibilities which loom up before the ever-living soul. And today, however many arguments may be developed pro and con by philosophers, the doctrine of immortality remains what it was in Saint Paul's time. Belief in it is based upon Christ's invitation to the soul, and upon the insight given when this invitation is heeded. Growing loss of belief — manifested above all in popular addiction to 'suicide pacts' carried out sometimes with amazing flippancy — is simply evidence of the fact that many hearts are closed to the Christian message. What, then, could be stranger or more ominous than the denial, from supposedly Christian pulpits, of the evidence for immortality? If these know nothing of the real evidence, where shall the puzzled individual expect to find it?"

— The Editors, "The Debate on Immortality"
Jan. 26, 1934

According to Gilkey, this view of death also provides the framework "for understanding that final ethical message of the gospel, and of many another religious tradition: he or she who would live, let them first die; he or she who would save their life, let them give it for another. To die to the self is to begin truly to live. Here death is more than a mere negation; it is itself a vehicle or medium of the transcendent, a medium that must be accepted, approved and willed, if life is to be found." If then we look to the cross of Christ and the reconciliation of God with men, that took place there, "in some strange way death has already become a medium of revelation, a mode of the divine action and so even a symbol of the divine through which the divine is itself manifested to us. Through this death, according to all Christian piety and theology, God manifests his/her power, purposes, and love to us. This we have also found appropriate and true for our own death: for a self that is willing to die to itself, death is an aspect of our existence to be accepted and embraced as itself a step, a medium, a symbol of the transcendent ground on which we are dependent."

IS IT NOT POSSIBLE to draw from this some conclusions in regard to a new approach to dying? To be more exact, might not even a different way of dying be possible, at least if we are

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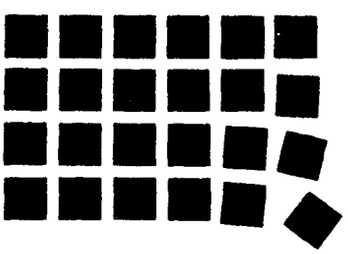
given time for dying and death does not come upon us suddenly? Ought it not to be possible to die — certainly supported and helped by all the skills and medicaments of the doctors — perhaps not without pains and worries, but nevertheless without fear of death? By relying — despite breaking off all links with human beings and things — wholly on the one link, *re-ligio*, while all departing involves hope of a new beginning, knowing that dying itself was always a part of Christian living. In this way would not a dying in composure, quiet expectation, hopeful certainty, be possible, perhaps even — after everything is settled that needs to be settled — in joyous, devoted gratitude for what was — with all its evils — a rich life in the present age, a life now dissolved *(aufgehoben* in the threefold Hegelian sense) into eternity? In the negative sense, destroyed by death. But at the same time in a positive sense, preserved by the death of death. And so finally elevated in the transcendental sense: elevated beyond life and death into the Infinite of eternal life, not in the dimension of space and time, but in the dimension of the divine.

If then it is not the doctor but God who remains Lord over life and death, death and life, man can also gain a new freedom in this life of suffering:

- liberation for a new freedom, not from suffering but in suffering, that freedom of the believer who is never depressed by any fear of pain, who never despairs even in death in all his doubts about himself and the world;
- liberation from the illusion that we could ever abolish death and the discordance of reality as a whole by technological developments, psychological stabilization, genetic manipulation, break through the vicious circle of human self-destruction and ourselves create the realm of freedom from all suffering and death;
- liberation for the sober understanding that suffering and death can be fought with every means, but not finally conquered, that all the techniques of healing still fail to silence the question of the healing of the whole;
- liberation for encouraging hope that suffering and dying are not the definitive, the ultimate, that — on the contrary — the ultimate for man is a life without suffering and death, which however neither the human individual nor human society can ever realize, but which man can expect only from the consummation, from the mysterious wholly Other, from his God.

A dying in gratitude — this would seem to me to be dying, not only with human, but with Christian dignity. That at least is what I felt in the Minster at Basel when as an ecumenical theologian I had to speak for Catholics on the death of my fellow countryman and fatherly friend Karl Barth. There was to be no lugubrious address, no lamentation, no groaning and no moaning, but gratitude and — after Mozartian sounds of flute and harp — the powerful singing of the congregation, in which not only believers joined but also many doubters and perhaps those who no longer believed or did not yet believe: "Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices, who wondrous things has done, in whom the world rejoices. . . ." Was all this wishful thinking? No, a thanksgiving in recollection and anticipation of an eternal life which again turns our attention to a meaningful temporal life.

BELIEVERS WHO GET THEIR CREED FROM 'READER'S DIGEST'



A new pastoral method in theology

JAMES TUNSTEAD BURTCHAELL

I REMEMBER ASSISTING at the wedding of friends in a parish church in Ohio. During the preliminary rites the bride and groom knelt on prie-dieux to the right and left, about forty feet apart, while the priest stood looming atop a flight of sanctuary stairs suggestive of an Aztec shrine or the great temple from *Aida*. As the exchange of vows drew near he called the couple up to him and administered their murmured pledges in a tight huddle with the spouses turning backs to us all. I was sure that if he were asked, that priest would assert that the ministers of the sacrament were the couple themselves, not the priest. The priest, he would say, stands as chief witness to what they do, and all of us in attendance join him in that witnessing. Thus his probable profession, thus the orthodox explanation of it all. Yet I could not fend off the suspicion that no matter what he might profess, operatively he felt himself to be the impresario and the guarantor of the transaction, with groom and bride in subordinate roles, and the rest of us out in the cold.

He was no hypocrite. He was sincere. He was merely following worn liturgical paths, and he would have bridled at the deviant theology I was fastening upon him. Nor had he gone out of his way to assert himself and exclude us. But by his unreflective observance he had, it seemed to me, taken on

FATHER JAMES TUNSTEAD BURTCHAELL, C.S.C., *a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame, is the author of* Philemon's Problem *and* Rachel Weeping, and Other Essays on Abortion *(Andrews & McMeel)*.

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himself an operational belief that in open conversation he would have disowned.

I began to keep an eye out for other disparities between what I came to call a person's professed belief and that person's operative belief. With time it came clear that the belief one operates by is not always on the downward side from what one is professing. I knew two fellow clergy, one a Presbyterian of crisply Calvinist persuasion and the other a learned Lutheran who cut his theology unswervingly on the Reformer's pattern. One preached a God whose grace would not change a man's heart if the man were not forechosen; the other preached a God whose grace could not change a man's heart even if he were chosen. By rights neither one should have been effective at moral exhortation: one because it wouldn't do the man any good and the other because man couldn't do any good. Yet they were two of the most moving, even compelling, preachers I have known. Somehow, despite the orthodoxies they recited, in their bones they knew that any who heard and heeded them could right well turn their hearts inside out and, by God's grace, live their lives in love. My two colleagues seemed to be more Christian when they were distracted from their dogmas.

Then I started noticing how many persons seemed not to be drawing any operative nourishment from their creeds. I saw believers who peaceably gave their allegiance to the Christian churches, not because Christ was a lamp unto their feet, but because the values they absorbed elsewhere made Christianity seem sensible. It seemed, on scrutiny, to be an allegiance on which you would not care to rest too much weight. The story is similarly told of a high Anglican divine who said from the pulpit, "As St. Paul wrote — and rightly so — . . . " Paul, one sees, was not calling muster; he was passing it.

I have heard out believers who quoted the Council of Trent but seemed really to get their creed from *Reader's Digest*. Others seemed to worship so unkind a God that one could only be relieved that they did not pursue their beliefs to conclusions that made much difference.

THOSE FIRST FASCINATING glimpses of belief operating at odds with profession moved me to share my inquiry with my students. They lost no time in stalking the countryside in search of all manner of beliefs, professed and operative. They began writing some of the better theological papers I have been favored with.

One student interviewed a series of funeral directors in four cities. All were men who saw their work as a religious calling. They saw themselves as equipped by long experience to guide their sometimes rattled clients through the tasks of burying their loved ones. To help families through their grief and bewilderment, and through the slowly ripening acceptance of death: this was, in their minds, Christian service.

Under the young man's queries they admitted some uneasiness about trends in contemporary American funeral practices. The copious use of cosmetics ("we 're-create' people." . . . "Would it help if they looked dead?" . . . "The worst traumatic thing you could do is to have someone come in and see their family in a very ghastly state."), the transfer of visitation from the family home to the funeral parlor ("Where are you going to park the cars?" . . . "It helps if you don't have to see the deceased in your house, it smooths death over a bit."), the shortening of visitation to an hour or so, or its entire elimination ("People have many things to do."), were all regretted, but the undertakers insisted that these were changes the public had insisted on. "The cosmetics are a denial of death, but I'd be out of business tomorrow if I didn't use them." "I think it's neat that they're finally letting people *die* at home instead of dragging them off to the hospital and slapping I.V.s in them. Whether we should take that one step further and bury them from home, I don't know. I guess maybe that's not the way society says we're going to do it." "Your younger generation, the quicker way they can get rid of mom and pop, the better."

What these men especially deplored was the growing preference for cremation: "If it comes to the point where I am going to be used as a disposal service, a trash collector, all human involvement gone, then I won't work in this business any more." As the student questioned his way forward, some of the funeral directors began reflecting that cremation might after all be only a logical progression along a trend that they themselves had been fostering. "Maybe that's why people are cremating more and more or not having the visitation. They want it over. *That's* it. To me, that's death denial: to try and get it over and forget it ever happened."

What would they prefer for their own loved ones, or for themselves? A long visitation (typically two full days), in their family home, with little or no cosmetics, and a service in church. Some wanted their family to spend the pre-funeral days all together, even between the hours of public visitation. One hoped that his family would gather afterwards for a meal of celebration. They all told stories of the need for bereaved people to occupy themselves with a deliberate, unhurried, and fulsome ritual in order to assimilate what they have lost through the death. This was clearly an experience they craved for their own.

The student was left to wonder how these men, who defined their work as a public service, a good Christian turn, counseling those who are at a loss, could plan for their own families rituals that would release the rains that cleanse the heart and mind of death's grief, but for the wider public clientele they would collaborate in a miserably different set of customs, muffled rituals that could only strangle sorrow and stifle mourning.

SOME STUDENTS found that people's professed beliefs were in perfect pitch with those they lived by. One studied the staff of a Catholic hospital and determined that, to judge by the close integration of the medical and pastoral personnel, they meant their claim to be healing both physically and spiritually. Another spent time with social activists and was impressed by the resonance between their account of

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their religious convictions and what he saw in their efforts.

Most fascinating were the instances when students figured someone was operating at a higher level than they could account for. A group of very elderly people gave an account of their churchmanship that was quite submissive: they said they took their beliefs, with no questions asked, from church authorities. But upon further inquiry they showed that they were quite prepared to think and act after considerable reflection of their own. And a young woman was astonished, in the midst of her intended exposé of church fund-raisers, to find some people whose explanations of their work were pretty loose, nevertheless holding themselves to a rigorously high standard of candor and honesty when approaching their clientele for contributions.

Several student enquirers were disquieted by a massive fracture they found in the tradition in the church's moral wisdom about sex. The fault line seemed to run right between the generation who are just coming into adulthood and those their parents' age. One student interviewed a group of women, all mothers of adolescent girls. Did they have views on sex outside of marriage? Yes, they did. Was it, in their opinion, harmful? Yes, they believed it was. Was this an important concern? Yes, for misuse of sex could be seriously destructive. Did their daughters share their judgment on this? Here the answer tended to be, "Well, she knows how I feel." The student, somewhat puzzled: "Well, does she live by it?" The mother: "I don't know. And, frankly, I would just as soon not know."

Here was a cloud of witnesses, all looking into their own experience and asserting that it confirmed the tradition of the church that extramarital sex was unfulfilling, inappropriate, incomplete. Yet they were unready to share this view with the young adults who depended on their prior experience as their cue and guide. My students, who were of that younger generation, were perplexed.

Another student discovered a comparable diffidence among religious counselors. She spoke with members of campus ministry, counselors at a Catholic Family Services center, and teams of religious professionals who helped produce programs for couples approaching marriage. Here were people, all professional and all explicitly identified as religiously committed, who were offering themselves as counselors for those moving into marriage and those who might be experiencing difficulties in their marriage. In every case, when the enquirer asked whether religious faith was a matter they covered in their counseling, the respondents demurred. It would, they said, "turn their clients off" if they turned the conversation explicitly towards the religious aspects of marriage. Did they see faith as a powerful component in Christian family life? Yes, they surely did. But as counselors they felt bound not to impose, not even to lay out, their own values. The values thereby became inoperative.

One last student, a woman, interrogated a number of priests, a group of parents, a cohort of college undergraduates, and a classroom of male high school seniors. The priests, she found, were profound and nuanced in their explanations of why sex should mean what marriage should mean. Said one: "The sexual act is total fusion into one. Sex without marriage is an act that promises more than it is prepared to deliver, being a physical union without intention for a complete psychological and spiritual union. Symbolically, the act says, 'We're totally for each other.' But there is no real intention of this because two unmarried people are not sure of their lives. They are not committed."The priests, however, had not been very articulate in conveying their vision to the laity. The parents also believed that premarital sex was wrong, but they were inarticulate about it. It was wrong because it was wrong. One of the mothers was adamant in her position against premarital sex, yet she commented that it would be licit for those "who have no morals."

The college students were highly sympathetic towards sexual exploration, whenever legitimated by "love." The high school students were mostly virgins, but mostly not sure they would wish to continue so. Here again was the fracture in the tradition: an older generation validating the tradition but unprepared to vouch for it to their juniors, lest they seem to be judging. The younger generation, meanwhile, is forming its own mind in profound ignorance of what their elders have learned either from their own elders or from their own

Le Roy Smith, Jr.

The Whole

Despite all broken odds,
I must believe some things
Are true,

As that the unity
All parts reflect demands,
And is,

One God alone, the whole,
Though variously named
And loved,

Or feared and misconceived,
Or dreaded and denied,
Yet known

As dust and breath are known
(Or crocodile and rose
And dream).

Whatever is evolves
Within this unity,
The whole,

Where worship is acceptance
And faith a blinding hope
Of vision.

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experience. They are in the situation of the girl who had been pregnant at 17 and who, at 23, commented: "I needed help to discern love from unhealthy dependency and manipulation. But adults around me never talked about sexual relationships in those terms." The elders clearly do have a judgment, and they profess it privately in harmony with the tradition, but for want of public expression it is inoperative.

ON THE SUBJECT of marriage one last student made mixed marriage his topic of interest. All the young couples he spoke with thought he was talking about interracial marriage. When he explained that it was a union between a man and a woman of different church allegiances their conversations dwindled. He observed that they fell speechless before the question of whether anything in a Catholic view of marriage was likely to challenge or conflict with the beliefs of a spouse from another religious background. All of them, married and unmarried, simply lacked any religious language with which to discuss marriage. The author's report on the interview conveys this in typical form:

> What did the vows mean? Strangely enough, this did not lead either Ruth or Robert to use religious categories and language to describe the commitment of marriage. They explained the meaning of the vows as "promises to keep loving your spouse until one of you dies." But what makes these vows particularly different from other promises? I asked. This caused another blank. Ruth volunteered that the promises you make in marriage are more important because they affect your whole life. How do they do that? I wanted to know. In reply, she and Robert contributed examples like: moving somewhere so that your spouse can take a new job, sharing all your material goods, and getting involved with your spouse's relatives. We wandered around this topic for a while longer without stumbling onto any talk about religion.
>
> Next, I tried to find out whether Ruth and Robert had simply not assimilated what all of those premarital counseling sessions had disclosed, or whether in all the preparation that they went through, nobody had bothered to teach them anything about what the tradition of the church says. Sad to say, the latter situation was the case. First, no one from Catholic Social Services said "Boo" about the religious roots of marriage, and virtually nothing about religion within marriage beyond asking if they both went to church. The sessions with the married couple are supposed to be the major part of the pre-Cana conferences. Each was devoted to a single subject, among which were sex, money, and religion. But Ruth and Robert could barely remember the religion session though they could recall a lot of specifics from the others. They only remembered it as vague and not very enlightening. Finally, in their handful of meetings with the celebrant of their nuptial Mass, he never talked about the religious character of marriage in explicitly religious language, though he did, they said, talk about the com-

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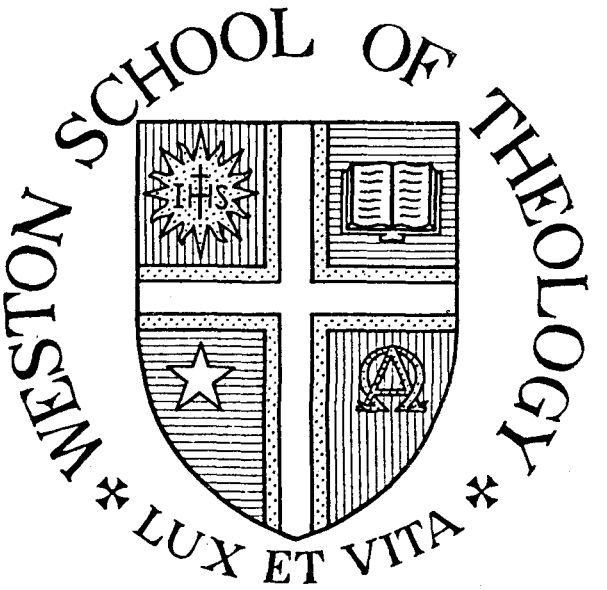

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mitment being for life and very special. . . . In the hope of informing them about the problems of being married to a smoker or when you've got no money or when sex isn't all that fun, the preparers never talked about the important things needed to understand marriage. What an extraordinary sort of teaching this is.

Next the student sat in on a theology course, involving continual discussion, on Marriage and the Family. The topic of the particular class was divorce. It lasted several hours and no one mentioned religion once. Bewildered, he sought out the campus chaplain responsible for marital preparation on campus. She told him that the sessions did not necessarily include consideration of the religious character of marriage. That tended to sound "preachy." "She told me that her response to this is to teach these couples, insofar as it is possible to teach them, how to translate their religious feelings into other terms that the younger couples can relate to better." "The problems that come up involve forgiveness, charity, consideration; these are certainly things that the church teaches are necessary in marriage. But you can talk about them without mentioning religion. If you do use religious examples and arguments, then you're going to lose a lot of people."

These projects directed to sex and marriage provide repeated evidence of an entire sector of moral wisdom in the Catholic tradition that has gone mute. It is not being transmitted to those of an age to need it and benefit by it. Perhaps it has been deprived of enough theological study to keep it refreshed and articulate. Perhaps it contains hard sayings, and a generation with a conspicuous failure of nerve has shrunk from vouching for it. Perhaps it has been bleached out of the fabric of faith by a dominating secularism that has Catholics embarrassed about their countersocial customs and convictions. Whatever the causes, this phenomenon is one to give us pause, long and grave pause.

So with the many studies that these young people have reported on. In so many different matters, among such different people, the Christian tradition was found wanting. It lacked straightforward, intelligible articulation, and it had quietly been edged aside by other visions of life under heaven which owed little to Jesus's Gospel.

THERE ARE young men and women in training today for the ministry who are taught to be familiar with the debate between Augustine and Pelagius, or the overturning of Schleiermacher by Barth, or the radical fulfillment of messianic hope by Jesus, or the reformist teachings of Vatican II. But they are going out to face a public which, with sublimely devout and docile submission, is really sucking up its faith from est and Alex Comfort and Erma Bombeck and Adam Smith and the Little Prince.

What these would-be shepherds should be given, for their own protection but more for that of the Christians they may or may not lead, is some skill in discerning just what it is that people do believe. For that they will have to work at squinting hard, and looking beyond first appearances. Their evidences will have to include more than the ancient symbols which people recite readily enough in church. What are the telltale ways that they disclose themselves at worship? What differences do any doctrines make in their family or economic life? What doctrines cannot peaceably be proposed in their hearing? How do they express themselves on matters of moral wisdom? When do they choose religious language, and when secular vocabulary? What religious matters are they incapable of restating in ordinary terms? What profound issues close to their hearts are they unable to describe *sub specie aeternitatis?*

I see this sort of discernment as a very important savvy in the equippage of the pastoral leader today. Either he or she will become skilled at this kind of diagnosis, or they will be doing autopsies. This sort of discernment and interpretation of the very unsystematic, operative beliefs of the Christian communicants is an ally, not a threat, to the historical and systematic studies that must always tend the tradition as professed. Without it these are always in danger of naiveté.

Faithcraft is one of the arts of the church. We depend on her to fashion words for our saying and thoughts for our understanding. We are welcomed into the church as into a community that has articulated its faith already. We come to sup at the table of tradition *table d'hôte*, not *à la carte*.

If faith comes by hearing and feeds on formulae, the provender is plentiful. We listen to scripture: harum-scarum stories of guerrilla skirmishes against hostile tribes, wise speculation about the crimp of joy by death, wondertales of the Carpenter Lord, and thumping arguments from the Weaver of wool and words. These are from holy books, ancient scrolls that are mulch to the roots of ancient faith. We pore over great puzzlers in the tradition: Nicaea and Orange and Toledo, Augustine and Alcuin and Teresa, and Richard Simon and Newman. They all helped find ways of putting the faith which would bear the stress of quarrel and the wear of time. The Apostles' Creed, the catechism, and the sacramental rites, to which many unnamed hands have been turned, also shape and steady our beliefs, like trellises upon which they may grow and branch. Even those of us who, in our own time and for our own neighbors, fashion the faith without its old patina must shape it on the armatures that the tradition has made normative.

So, whether we study the great foresayers or sing at Eucharist or expound among our fellows, we are always provided with ways of professing our faith. The words and thoughts are already there.

What we are less liberally provided is some way to discern how penetratingly the faith that we profess in credoing chorus is assented to in our private selves and souls. How well has the tradition impregnated our bones? How consistently does it embody itself in what we do?

Obviously this type of inquiry nudges theology from its companionship with the humanities towards kinship with the social sciences. What I have in mind as the method to be developed will have to be more subtle than the interrogatories used by polling centers. But the nature of its operational observations will have to be so diverse and potentially subjective that they will make many social scientists uneasy. Also, it

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remains to be seen what we should make of people whose professed belief is disengaged from their operative convictions. Is this how we become secularized? Does this put believers beyond the reach of the church's preaching? Is widespread dissonance between these levels of belief an indicator of a courteous but decisive rejection of contemporary preaching or theology? And, when someone's profession is not at all verified by his or her behavior, to what extent is it fair to judge them only by the latter, when what they profess is sincerely said? These are all questions to be explored.

If it were possible to develop a way of discerning this methodically, it would be a discipline in theology that would be both doctrinal and pastoral. I would think it an invaluable pastoral strategy to be able to scan the gestures and ventures of life that are more intuitive than verbal, more preoccupied than alert, more original and less conformist, and to descry whether there are any struts of solid Christian belief serving as the load-bearing supports of our people's lives. This is a pastoral method which it is worth our while to develop.

Screen

WRAP UP

CRITICAL SIX PACK

IN MY LAST COLUMN I was trying to cope with the fact that there were far more good films around last fall than I had had space to write about. But I only got part way there. This, then, is the balance of my list:

Never Cry Wolf is about a man named Tyler (Charles Martin Smith) who goes to study the Alaskan wolf, and becomes one himself. He has to, because he has arrived in the Alaskan tundra so ill-equipped, both mentally and materially, that he wouldn't survive were he not able to figure out from the wolves how to do it. His education begins when he tracks a white wolf with such sublime incompetence, he finally has to sit tight and let the wolf come to him. It does, peeing here and there around the perimeter of his camp to show what the territorial boundaries are to be. So Tyler pees here and there himself, to show he understands what the rules are. Tyler can't figure how the wolf and its family get by, when he is practically starving to death. Then he realizes that they're eating the hordes of mice he's been chasing from his tent. He begins trapping and stewing and roasting the little critters himself.

This film was made by Carroll Ballard, who did *The Black Stallion*. He makes movies like this because he grew up around Lake Tahoe when it was still pretty much a lake in the wilderness. He's a man who loves moviemaking, but loves the natural world even more, which is why his movies about it are unique.

Rear Window is perhaps even more pleasurable now than when it was made in 1954. On the one hand, nothing about the film seems dated. As a thriller, this story of a laid-up photojournalist who discovers a murder right outside his window is as slick, neat, and credible as ever. It is, like *Psycho*, a film about voyeurism made by the movies' consummate voyeur. Hitchcock was never on surer ground than when dealing with this theme. On the other hand, the film's appeal now is that its backyard world seems not scary, but secure and carefree. Hitchcock built a block-long set in order to create this Greenwich Village apartment world. It really does seem a world that is, aside from an occasional psychopath (Raymond Burr), sealed off from harm — a world in which it's safe for James Stewart and Grace Kelly to fall in love. I don't know. Maybe this was always part of the film's appeal. Hitchcock of course knew that the artificiality and cleverness of the world he offered us were what made it attractive. So did we, I suppose — even then.

This is the first of five re-releases of films to which Hitchcock himself retained the rights. We've still got *Vertigo, Rope, The Trouble with Harry* and the 1956 *Man Who Knew Too Much* to look forward to.

However vague I was about fatherhood in other ways, there were two things I knew I wanted for my daughter: that she not be squeamish about "yukky" things like dead animals, and that she know how to punch with her fist and forearm aligned. On those two points at least, I hoped my little girl would not conform to the stereotype of sugar and spice and everything nice. This doesn't mean that I wanted her to grow up to be

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Shirley Muldowney — only that I think a woman like Muldowney, as portrayed by Bonnie Bedelia in *Heart Like a Wheel,* is pretty terrific. Muldowney is a real person who started drag racing her boyfriend's hot rods, and ended up three-time national top-fuel champion. (That's like being a golfer who wins the PGA three times.) Muldowney was the first woman ever permitted to compete in drag racing; she was the first *person* ever to win top fuel three times. Bedelia manages to convey, even in appearance, the changes Muldowney went through over the twenty years the film covers. Bedelia goes from the sweet working-class toughness of a girl who can't get enough of cars, to the conflicted maturity of a woman who has to leave the conniving man (Beau Bridges) who sponsored her career.

Can you imagine comic personalities more opposite than Mel Brooks and Jack Benny? Where the latter was quiet and a little fey, the former is loud and manic. Where Benny was a quipster who pointed out the foolishness of others, Brooks is a zany who makes a fool of himself. As incompatible as their styles seem, though, the re-make of *To Be or Not to Be* with Brooks in Benny's role does work. As directed by Alan Johnson, this adaptation is very faithful to Ernst Lubitsch's 1942 classic. It's a sign of the strength of the original material that it can succeed with somebody so different in the lead role. (Anne Bancroft's performance in Carole Lombard's role seems more compatible with the original film.) Despite a strong new beginning where Brooks and Bancroft sing "Sweet Georgia Brown" in Polish, the film seems to be groping until the original plot — about an acting troupe in Warsaw that outsmarts the Nazis — takes over. Then the gags fly so fast and furious that we hardly have time to catch our breath between laughs.

Terms of Endearment is a movie full of surprises. That two major stars — Shirley MacLaine and Jack Nicholson — would want to appear older than they are is certainly unusual. That Deborah Winger can act is news, at least to me. That someone trained in TV sitcoms, like director James Brooks, can sustain a complex, delicate story is novel. And that a movie which might have fallen into so many clichés doesn't do so is absolutely amazing. In fact, everything about this story of a woman, her daughter, and an astronaut is improbable, which is why it seems human and true. We are not entirely unprepared when it suddenly turns tragic in the middle, for there has been an edge of sadness to the story, a genuine ambivalence, all along. This is why it can at the same time be very funny and very weepy, and unembarrassingly poignant on both counts. The material in this movie could have made the worst soap opera you ever saw. The wonder of the movie — as, sometimes, of life — is that something so much more compelling and worthwhile happens instead. COLIN L. WESTERBECK, JR.

(Beginning with the next issue, Commonweal*'s movie reviews will be written by guest columnists.)*

WHERE IS THE MISSING JESUS?

Meeting the New Testament

PHEME PERKINS

IT'S SAFE to say that no subfield of contemporary theology holds more importance than the study of the New Testament. Nor is there any area in which the development of a variety of methods of study has been more rapid in recent decades. Depending on point of view, such developments can furnish an excess of riches or simply bewilder. Just what are students likely to find in the best of contemporary introductions to New Testament study? And what problems do such introductions pose for students and teachers alike?

New Testament studies have moved out of the denominational seminary and college into the intellectual pluralism of the modern university. New Testament scholars find their analysis of the early Christian material enriched by the methods and questions raised in other academic fields: history and archaeology, sociology and anthropology, literary criticism and linguistics, and to a lesser extent economics and psychology. Raymond F. Collins's brief history of the established methods of New Testament analysis shows that critical study of the New Testament in the past two centuries has been indebted to the disciplines fostered by the modern university. Contemporary New Testament work is merely following the course charted at its inception.

However, this list of allied disciplines also shows the weak flank of the modern study, and, perhaps of modernism generally: both philosophy and other theological disciplines are not part of the context of modern introduction. Collins's work is the only one which addresses the problem of the *theological* relevance of New Testament study. He includes a thought-provoking chapter on exegesis and the church, (which includes theology, catechesis, preaching, and spirituality), a study of the concept of inspiration, and a discussion of the reception of biblical studies by the Roman Catholic magisterium. Not surprisingly, the author teaches in a Roman Catholic seminary at Louvain. The other introductions are content to treat the question of the significance of the New Testament to the church under the history of the emergence of the New Testament canon. Paul Achtemeier has provided a fine de-

PHEME PERKINS *is the author of several books on the New Testament, including* Ministering in the Pauline Churches *and* Love Commands in the New Testament *(Paulist).*

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INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

Raymond F.Collins
Doubleday, $24.95, 449 pp.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

An Introduction

Norman Perrin and Dennis C.Duling
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (second edition), $14.95 paper, 516 pp.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW TESTAMENT

Howard Clark Kee
Prentice Hall (fourth edition), $22.95, 408 pp.

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

VOLUME ONE: HISTORY, CULTURE, AND RELIGION OF THE HELLENISTIC AGE.

Helmut Koester
Fortress and Walter de Gruyter, $24.95, 428 pp.

INTRODUCTION TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

VOLUME TWO: HISTORY AND LITERATURE OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Helmut Koester
Fortress and Walter de Gruyter, $22.95, 364 pp.

scription of this process in an appendix to the Kee volume. Duling's appendix on the topic is distinguished from the others by beginning with the topic of Hebrew canon and the Christian canon of the Old Testament.

THE DISAPPEARANCE of genuine philosophical and theological questioning from the modern university may also be allied with the disappearance of Jesus from New Testament introductions. Perrin-Duling is the most explicit example. Discussion of Jesus is relegated to the final chapter. Jesus is the presupposition of there being a New Testament, but New Testament study *is not about Jesus*. It is about the history and literary remains of the early Christian movement, which held various beliefs about Jesus. Koester is equally short on the question. The vast syncretism of the hellenistic world, which he details in his first volume, leads to a portrayal of Christianity as one among the many hellenistic cults. Even its Jewish roots are hellenized, and, indeed, the proportion of study given to Jewish materials is considerably less in Koester's work than in that of other scholars. Given the increasing evidence of continued interaction between Christianity and Judaism throughout the period of the New Testament that is emerging in all recent studies of the Gospels and even in the study of the Gnostic materials that Koester uses so frequently in his reconstruction, one cannot say that his work is representative of the latest scholarship. Christianity, Koester holds, did not simply arise out of Judaism nor did it arise directly out of the ministry of Jesus. Thus, he treats the Jesus traditions under the regional history of Palestinian Christianity.

Kee treats New Testament introduction around the unifying theme of the emergence of new self-identity in community. He uses categories from sociology of knowledge and anthropology to describe the "life world" in which the New Testament writings are shaped. Jesus and his followers are seen in the radical discipleship of the sayings tradition. One also finds the treatment of the synoptic Gospels punctuated with comparisons of the Gospel presentation and Jesus as he seems to have been. Thus, Kee's reader does have some opportunity to ask how "what came of it" is related to the origins in the ministry of Jesus.

Kee's unified perspective also provides a sharp focus to the historical background. He describes Judaism, the imperial ambitions of Alexander and the Caesars, and the various religious movements of the time as part of a quest for identity and community in a world where the old patterns no longer work. The reader is encouraged to view the New Testament material as a series of responses to these fundamental questions. Kee includes an extensive treatment of the Essene community as an answer to the problem of alternative community for some in Judaism. He cuts down on the historical recital of rulers, battles, and conquests to make room for these issues. This approach provides a much more direct link to the concerns of the student than the mere rehearsal of historical information in the other introductions.

Koester's first volume might well provide a reference encyclopedia for the historical and cultural material of the period. He attempts to sort out the different conditions in different segments of the empire; includes much material on socio-economic conditions, and emphasizes the widespread literary culture of the hellenistic world. Of course, this emphasis serves a "hidden agenda"; Koester can avoid the issues of the difference between oral and written tradition raised by Walter Ong, Werner Kelber, and others, by asserting that this level of literary cultivation means that the traditions of Jesus's sayings would have been preserved in written collections from a very early period. This conviction then surfaces in his use of Gnostic materials from the second and third centuries to illuminate traditions said to underlie the New Testament.

Kee, on the other hand, uses the category of "life world" to recast the traditional setting of form criticism and takes the work of Ong and Guttgemanns seriously. Koester does not have an integrating vision of the formation of human communities and traditions. Some of his economic categories appear to be neo-Marxist in origin. but they are not sufficiently explicated to have any impact on the presentation.

LACK OF SOME integrating vision shows in the transition into Koester's second volume. (The original German edition had both parts in a single vol-

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ume.) There, the reader is treated to an extensive history of early Christian literature. This history is prefaced by a treatment of textual, source, form, and tradition criticism, which includes the synoptic Gospels, Pauline letters, and early Christian writings from the apostolic fathers and apologists. An account of John the Baptist, Jesus, and, in much more detail, the life of Paul serves to initiate the history (Perrin-Duling also begins its exposition of the New Testament with a history of early Christianity and with the Pauline material rather than with the Gospels. Kee defends beginning with Jesus and the Gospels by pointing out that though the Gospels are later than the Pauline material, they reflect earlier traditions.) Koester then gives a history of the early Christian literature associated with three regions, Palestine and Syria; Egypt; Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. This account, which has simply added newly published Gnostic materials to a schema that Koester published in the 1960s, rejects the idea that the study of the canonical materials should have any priority in New Testament introduction. Consequently, the canonical books are simply part of the mass of early Christian remains from the various regions. Students would have to have studied some other introduction to the New Testament and have had at least a semester course of early church history before they could decipher this material.

Scholars will doubtless be troubled by Koester's sweeping generalizations and texts which turn up in categories that do not always reflect the best in scholarly opinion. Equally problematic is the lack of an integrating vision beyond geographical categories; this leaves the reader wondering what happened to all of the regional analysis and history. The American publishers have realized that the two volumes are quite unrelated and issued them for sale independently of each other. But the reader of the two volumes will surely demand more.

Kee has shown how that "more" might be achieved. Indeed, Kee's presentation of the Greco-Roman religious cults, while less detailed than Koester's, is far superior in its empathy for members of the cult. It challenges the reader to enter the world of the first century and to attempt to "feel" its life and problems. Both Kee and Koester have splendid black and white photographs of sites and objects from the period, which considerably enrich the presentation of the material. However, Koester's photographs are usually single object, museum pieces, or close-up details of a site. Kee's, on the other hand, provide a more sweeping vision. Taken together, they provide excellent visual material.

ANOTHER CONCERN of those who teach introduction to New Testament is engaging students in the reading and analysis of the text itself. The historical, archaeological, and sociological analyses often make such fascinating reading in themselves, that study of the actual text takes a back seat. Perrin-Duling addresses this problem by providing much of its treatment in exegetical surveys of the New Testament writings. These are very helpful to students reading through the New Testament, though they tempt some to further neglect of the text.

For a "hands on" approach to the methods of analyzing the New Testament material, one should turn to Collins. His book is not an introduction to the writings in the New Testament. Nor does it provide a history of the emergence and development of New Testament Christianity. Instead, it is an introduction to the actual methods of studying the writings of the New Testament. Each methodological chapter begins with a brief history of the development of that method. It then moves to use of the method of drawing illustrations from modern writings and newspapers to provide students with a "feel for" the process, and then treating examples within the New Testament. Each chapter concludes with application of its methods to the stories of the Message of John the Baptist and the Stilling of the Storm. These detailed analyses enable the student to see what each method contributes to our understanding of the passage.

Collins's work is unusual in that it contains a chapter devoted to the impact of various forms of structuralism on New Testament studies. His discussion of "myth" as a structuralist category is light-years away from the existential and phenomenological categories used in the treatment of myth and history in the New Testament by Perrin-Duling. His treatment of semiotics helps illuminate the interaction between New Testament studies and linguistics. Collins also provides a brief description of psychoanalytic analysis of texts and the neo-Marxist reading of the New Testament in his chapter on historical-critical reading of the New Testament. Combined with Kee's work on sociology and anthropology, the reader gains an appreciation for the real diversity of methods used to approach the New Testament. Collins uses the insights of structuralism in a final analysis of the Stilling of the Storm to show that as a story of the Mysterious Host, it draws together a number of levels in the Gospel's presentation of Jesus. This is the best case for use of structural and semiotic analysis that I have yet seen.

These volumes make it clear that New Testament introduction is alive and thriving. Its methods are diverse. The archaeological and historical base upon which New Testament scholars draw is expanding. As Collins rightly insists, we must learn from these methods to appreciate the experience of faith that has been transmitted in these writings. There is also room for critical reflection. Is the replacement of philosophical and theological questions by those of the humanities and social sciences entirely appropriate to the material itself? And if we learn from "de-constructionist" critics to attend to the gaps in our narrative, then we must ask where is the missing Jesus? The lost faith about which the modern university is forbidden to speak haunts us in his absence.

A Dialogue on the Ethics of Abortion, with Beverly Wildung Harrison, author of *Our Right to Choose: Toward a New Ethic of Abortion*; Peter Steinfels, executive editor, *Commonweal*; Barbara Andolsen, assistant professor of religion and ethics, Rutgers; Lisa Desposito, president, Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights. Feb. 2, 7:30 p.m., Riverside Church, 9th fl. Tower Lounge, Riverside Dr. at 120th, New York City. $2 donation. For more information: (212) 663-2751.

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Books: WHITHER LIBERATION THEOLOGY?

LIBERATION theologies are the principal forms of Christian prophetic thought and action in our contemporary age. They represent the ways of life and struggle of Christians around the world who have convinced remnants of the church to open its eyes to human misery and oppose socioeconomic systems and political structures that perpetuate such misery. Like all serious modes of inquiry, liberation theologies are predicated on crisis — on human situations of tremendous danger and incipient possibility. Such concrete crises invariably generate forms of critical consciousness. Liberation theologies are the predominant forms of critical consciousness within the Christian church that respond to the dangers of class, racial, and sexual privilege, and project the possibility of

FAITH AND IDEOLOGIES
Juan Luis Segundo
Orbis, $14.95, 368 pp.

Cornel West

class, racial, and sexual equality.

Black, Feminist, Native American, Hispanic, and especially Latin American versions of liberation theology have made major contributions to Christian thought and the life of the church. The theological theme of God's identification with the poor and oppressed now resounds throughout our seminaries, takes shape in some of our ecclesiastical agencies, and regulates the practices in a select few of our churches. The methodological mandate for systemic social analysis of structures of domination in light of the good news of Jesus Christ is forcing many theologians, preachers, and laity to take seriously the works of Karl Marx and Max Weber, Simone de Beauvoir and W.E.B. Du Bois, Anthony Giddens, and Christopher Lasch. In short, liberation theologies have pushed religious thinkers beyond their usual parochial concerns and challenged churches to become more enlightened participants in the great political and economic issues of our time.

But beneath this intense intellectual ferment and heated political discourse lurks a hidden truth: *the high moment of liberation theology has passed.* The original texts of James Cone, Mary Daly, and Gustavo Gutiérrez spawned widely diffused and dispersed theological currents. As with all ground-breaking upsurges,

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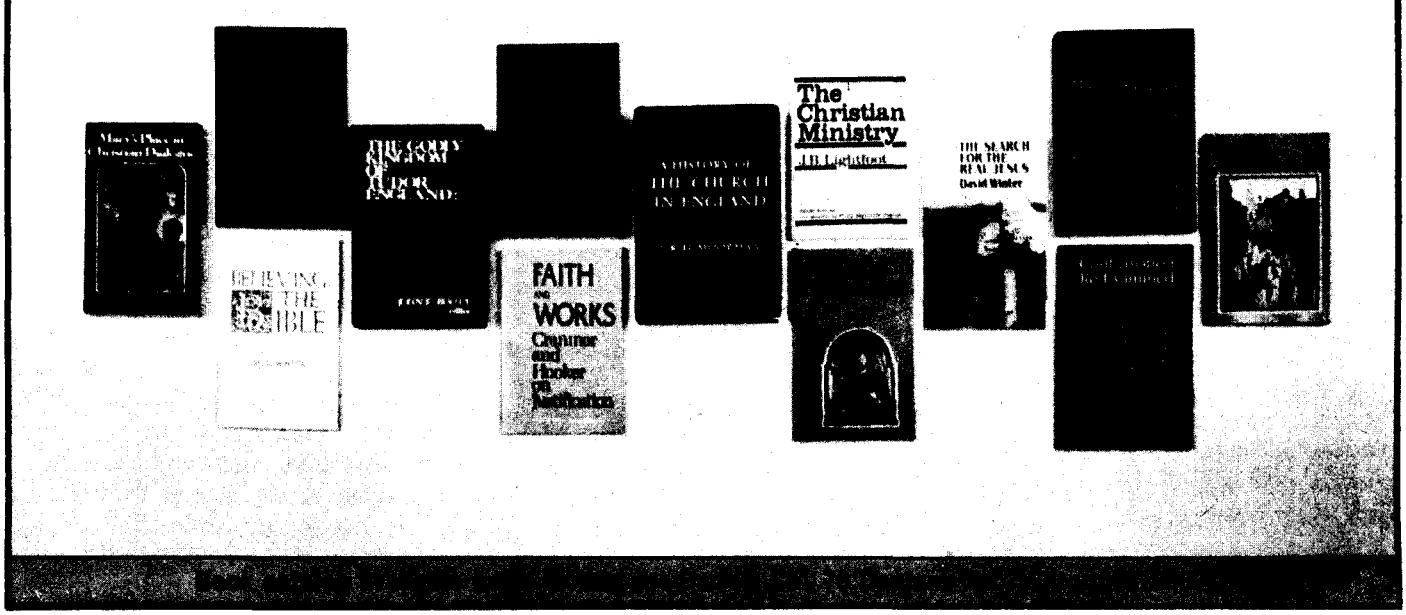

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liberation theologies emerged with impressive power and insight and presently have evolved in diverse and multiple forms.

This evolution of liberation theologies is particularly noteworthy in that these theologies ushered forth from an academic discipline which suffers from an immense identity crisis. Hence, the early enthusiasm for liberation theologies can be attributed not only to the relevance of their perspectives for the oppressed but also to the hope that these theologies would breathe new life into a fading and faltering mode of intellectual reflection. To put it crudely, liberation theologies were expected to both change the world and keep theology alive.

Yet as the zenith of liberation theological reflection fades, we witness the proliferation of philosophical investigations, cultural critiques, social analyses, and historical reconstructions from Christian liberationist perspectives. The theological concerns of liberation theology are now shifting to either philosophical, cultural, social analytical, or historical concerns. This move requires not only rigorous interdisciplinary tools, but also more intense interaction with secular colleagues — thereby facilitating more religious participation within the larger public conversation in society and culture at large.

This positive dialogue and candid alliance with both the Academy and political movements helps break down the walls of demarcation between divinity schools and universities, preachers and political activists. But it also could result in a new kind of theological evasion, a refusal to take seriously the difficult task of specifying Christian identity in a pluralistic world. And as the tentacles of secular professionalism and vulgar politicization further pervade our seminaries and divinity schools, even the theological task itself could become passé.

In regard to this precarious though pregnant situation, liberation theologies more than likely will move in one of four directions. They will: (1) relapse back into traditional kinds of systematic theology equipped with new themes, motifs, and insights — as in Jon Sobrino's *Christology at the Crossroads*; (2) retreat into versions of philosophical anthropology (that is, a philosophy of human existence) which appeal to Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, or the early Marx and thereby subvert systematic theology — as in Juan Luis Segundo's *The Liberation of Theology*; (3) spill over into social theory, cultural criticism, and historical reconstruction which may take either Christian or post-Christian forms — as in Elisabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza's *In Memory of Her* or Mary Daly's *Gynecology*, respectively; or (4) resort to practical writings in journalistic styles which attempt to reach the general literate laity and clergy — as in James Cone's *My Soul Looks Back*.

The first alternative is essential but limited; it preserves precious links with elements of the tradition and church but at the inescapable expense of intellectual marginality in our secular intellectual milieu. The second option, philosophic anthropology, is a trap to be avoided by both theologians and philosophers

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alike; it succumbs to a seductive quest for universal categorical schemas that yield either formal results too empty for usefulness or transcendental frameworks that conceal their historicity. The third line of development is the most fruitful and challenging; it sidelines many narrowly trained theologians and gives prominence to Christian and secular social theorists, cultural critics, and historians. The last direction performs a crucial propagandistic role, but provides little, if any, intellectual depth.

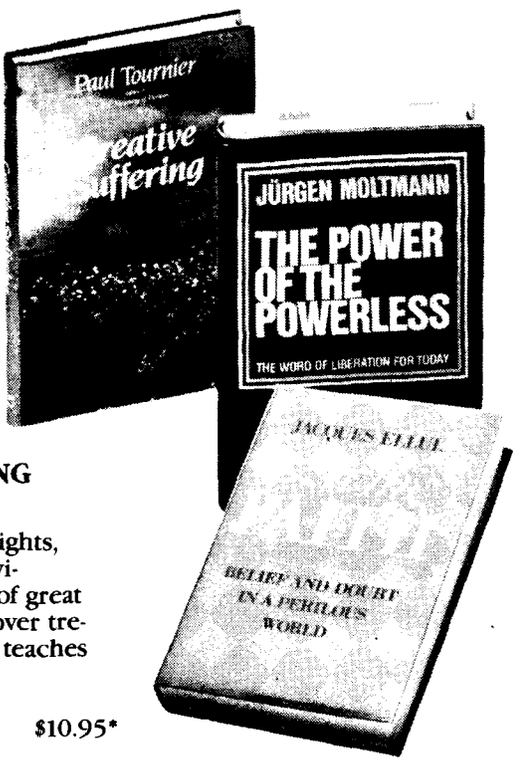
Juan Luis Segundo's *Faith and Ideologies* exemplifies the second option. This book builds on his earlier work and puts forward a full-blown philosophical anthropology — a detailed specification of "the universal dimensions of human beings." Segundo is the most ambitious and audacious of the Latin American liberation religious thinkers. He disregards the traditional intellectual division of labor in the university and eagerly pursues a daring idea, no matter how half-baked that idea may be. In this book, Segundo's ambition and audacity lead to organizational fragmentation and philosophical confusion.

Segundo's aim in this text is threefold. First, to infuse new content in the categorical notions of faith and ideology. Second, to explore how these two ideas relate to one another, using Christianity and Marxism as interlocutors. Third, to examine the concrete situation of present-day Latin America in light of his philosophical perspective. Like Immanuel Kant and Matthew Arnold, Segundo wants to preserve the transcendent character of moral conduct yet create a comprehensive secular discourse which subsumes religion. In short, his primary intention is to displace theology and put forward a new philosophical anthropology.

But in Chapter I entitled "Toward A New Statement of the Problem," it becomes quite clear that Segundo's philosophical anthropology is not new at all. Rather it is a warmed-over version of neo-Kantianism — much less refined than those found in Wilhelm Dilthey or Jurgen Habermas. Segundo's two "basic anthropological dimensions" are faith and ideology. He understands "faith" to be the human acquisition of meaning and value principally by means of socialization. "Ideology" is taken to be the human techniques of efficacy and predictability necessary to actualize one's value-laden ends or goals.

Following Gregory Bateson's *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Segundo defines faith as a "partially self-validating" set of "epistemological and ontological premises" which human beings impose on "the flux of happenings" for purposes of order and coherence. Since these "premises" circumscribe the limits of human knowledge, they are immune from rational validation, hence "self-validating." Yet Segundo also defines faith as a "certain type of knowledge." Here confusion sets in. Can faith be a set of "premises" which delimit what we can and do know and also be a

THEOLOGY FOR TODAY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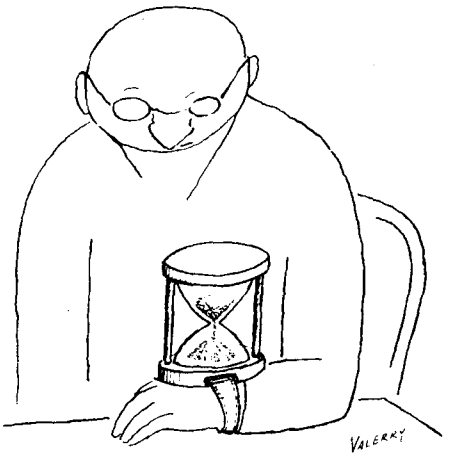
certain type of knowledge? Is the latter a transcendental form of knowledge, a special kind of knowledge that enables us to know the premises that constitute preconditions for knowledge? Is this not viciously circular? Or does Segundo mean that the premises are socially derived and hence we know them through social and historical analysis? If so, then can he consistently claim that faith is "an anthropological dimension as universal as the human species itself"? Surely not. He must either fall back on neo-Kantianism and provide an account of faith as an anthropological dimension or adopt a Mannheimian sociology of knowledge and give up talk about such dimensions. At one point in his text, Segundo endorses Mannheim's "real sociology of knowledge" yet still characterizes the indispensable unconditional absolute as a value, a "transcendent datum." Like Kant of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, philosophical anthropology has solely a self-validating, i.e., moral basis. But, following Mannheim, if morality is socially constituted, philosophical anthropology is undercut.



To add more confusion, Segundo understands faith as "the fund of saved energy on which all human planning is based." In addition to this technocratic image of faith, Segundo's attempt to link this conception of faith to his overarching theory of evolution — with its desirable homeostatic mechanisms and the "best energy calculus" — is utterly unconvincing. Owing to his imprecise and amorphous definitions of faith, it is difficult to follow his comparative criticisms of Pannenberg's notion of trust and Tracy's conception of religion.

In his discussion of faith, Segundo relies upon a pre-Wittgensteinian view of language. That is, in contrast to Wittgenstein's view that language constitutes our social world, Segundo holds that language expresses private worlds. In order to make clear how people "express in words their values-structure, their meaning-world," Segundo engages in some close readings of poems — especially Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer's famous *Rima*. After a rather idiosyncratic though interesting interpretation, Segundo highlights human "access, through the medium of language, to the vast, structured realm of meaning and values." This neo-Kantian vocabulary, found in Ernst Cassirer and Susanne K. Langer, is highly suspect. Yet, ironically, Segundo persists with this expressivist view of language even after invoking the work of the later Wittgenstein which precludes any such view. At this point one is forced to conclude that Segundo's intellectual project yields philosophical confusion.

Similar to Habermas, Segundo fears that meaning-structures (faith) are "structured in terms of efficacy (ideology) alone." That is, issues involving value are reduced to technical matters. And this fear is justified. But is not his own technocratic conception of faith a reduction of meaning to mere use, planning, and efficacy? If so, he promotes the very program he fears. Segundo rightly exposes the dimension of faith in modern and postmodern science — a point noted by David Hume and refined by Michael Polanyi — yet his means-ends mode of philosophical and political analysis reeks of technocratic rationality. Even John Dewey, no friend of modern Luddites like Martin Heidegger, grappled more seriously with the reductionist implications and managerial consequences of crude means-ends analyses.

The second and third parts of Segundo's book are much better than the first. The section on Christianity and Marxism is, though far from original, competent. His claims regarding Marx's rejection of philosophy for science and opposition to ontological materialism are persuasive. Yet his defense of Erich Fromm's claim that Marx put forward a philosophical anthropology — which is true for the

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early Marx but rejected by the later Marx — is perplexing. Segundo rightly suggests that the continuity between the early and later Marx consists of his "ideal conception of the human being." But does such an ideal constitute a philosophical anthropology? Does the mere possession of values mean that one adheres to a philosophical anthropology? Surely not. So why defend Fromm's exorbitant claim?

The last section of Segundo's book is a sketch of "a Latin American anthropology" — a reading of Latin American realities from 1950-1975 in light of his philosophical perspective. After brief generalizations of the periods of consciousness-raising, violent action, and repression, Segundo tries to go beyond mere economic and political analysis and accents "the ecological state of human beings" in relation to nature, the state, and class exploitation. He ends his book calling for the creation of "an effective cultural tradition" — a task to be achieved only if the supreme evolutionary quality, flexibility, is internalized and transmitted to the younger generation of freedom fighters.

In stark contrast to *The Liberation of Theology*, Segundo's *Faith and Ideologies* is more a phenomenon than an event, a symptom of the second alternative in the evolution of liberation theologies rather than a mover and shaker on the contemporary scene. His book illustrates the severe limitations of opting for a full-blown philosophical anthropology. And even if one decides to do so, it is better to revise already refined versions rather than create one's own out of thin air or derived from anthropologists and psychologists.

In my opinion, the major intellectual task of liberation theologians is to continue to reexamine and reshape the traditional doctrines of the church, engage in more serious efforts of social theory, cultural criticism, and historical reconstruction, and write palpable and intelligible essays and texts for the nonacademic literate laity and clergy. Needless to say, these three activities require different persons working on different terrains. The church theologians are not likely to put forward sophisticated social analyses, just as the more broadly engaged social theorist cannot possibly do justice to the complexities of church theology — though both can write for a wider audience.

Furthermore, if liberation theologies have taught us anything, it is that Christian thinkers must be organically linked with prophetic churches and progressive movements. An uncommitted and detached liberation theologian is a contradiction in terms. Without some form of ecclesiastical and political praxis, critical consciousness becomes as sounding brass and theological reflection a tinkling cymbal.

Ethics & isolation

AMERICAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL ETHICS
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Charles E. Curran
Notre Dame, $21.95, 353 pp.

FORCED OPTIONS
SOCIAL DECISIONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
Roger Lincoln Shinn
Harper & Row, $16.95, 267 pp.

Raymond A. Schroth

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Thus, for the last decade, Catholics—now with like-minded fellow Christians— have begun asking themselves if the spiritual cost of membership in the Country Club has been too high: even the liturgy for the Fourth of July reflects this questioning as it warns against nationalism and has us pray that we might "ward off the pride that comes with worldly wealth and power."

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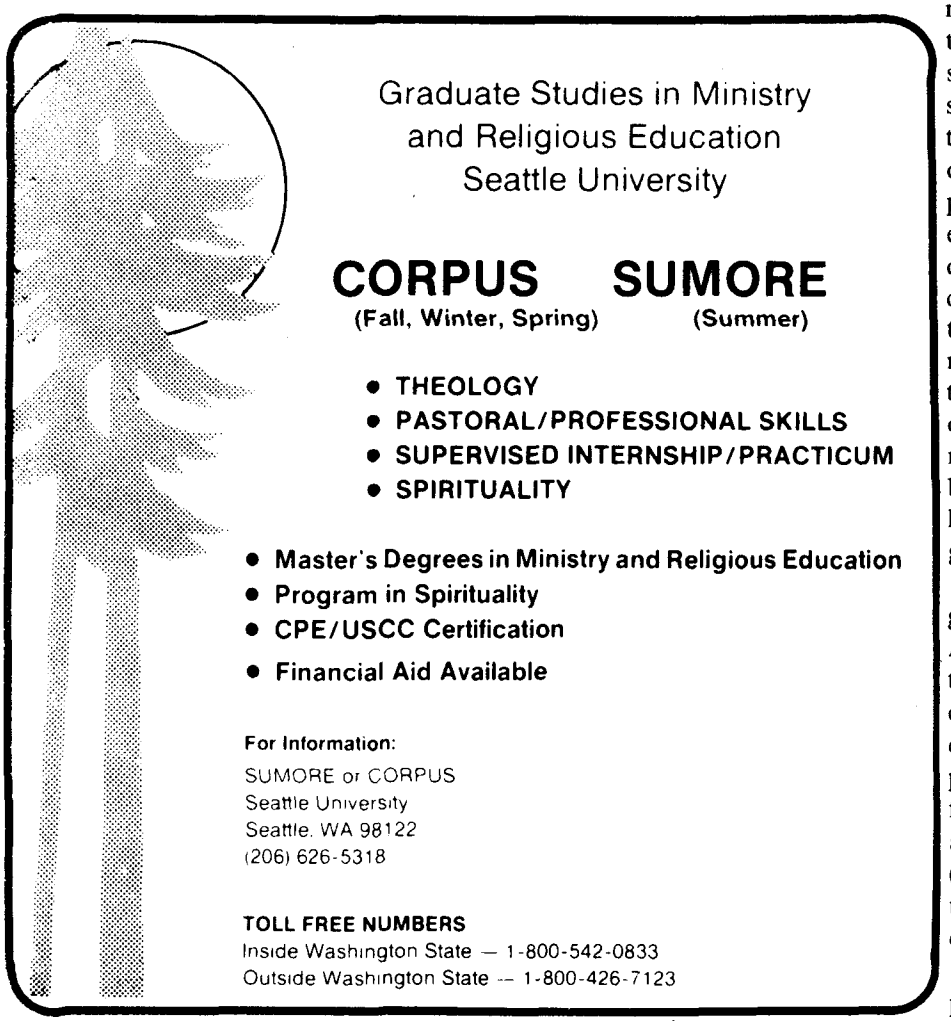
but-not-timorous moralists, traces five twentieth-century men and movements—John A. Ryan, the Central Verein, Paul Hanley Furfey, John Courtney Murray, S.J., and James W. Douglass—in a critical analysis of the principal ways in which Catholics have defined the social, economic, and moral costs of being American. In *Forced Options*, Roger Shinn, of Union Theological Seminary, takes up where Curran leaves off: in an imaginative, well-researched and well-written series of twenty-first century scenarios in which the "new" problems—the destruction of the environment, the depletion of energy, uncontrolled population growth, the chaos of world disorder, and nuclear war—overtake the moralists with dilemmas which John Ryan, who wrote the famous 1919 Bishops' Program of Reconstruction, and maybe even John Courtney Murray, never dreamed of. One is the "technotopia":

> By the year 2100 the world has recovered from the near breakdown at the end of the twentieth century. At that time the population of the globe had reached 6.5 billion, and about 20 million people starved in one year . . . Now, within slightly less than a century of the new era, the world population has stabilized at ten billion people. . . . The change in procreative habits was hard to work out, but not so hard as some had expected. The great symbolic change came in 2012, when the Vatican issued a solemn encyclical on the moral duty of persons to limit reproduction. Some of the older bishops complained, but the Pope resolutely stuck to her position and made a worldwide tour advocating it.

Curran's method, on the other hand, is to briefly place his subject's career in context, painstakingly summarize his work, then offer criticisms and comments of his own. It goes something like this: John A. Ryan, dubbed by Father Charles E. Coughlin "the Right Reverend New Dealer," who developed the idea of the obligation to pay a family living wage, exemplified the best of American social liberalism; but his "principle of expediency," which insisted that good ethics is also good economics, failed to acknowledge that the self-interest of capitalists is often incompatible with social justice, and his reliance on natural law and his insistence on structural change neglected Scripture and the need for a change of heart.

Catholic University sociologist Paul Hanley Furfey offered the fullest theoretical development of the Catholic radicalism inspired by the Catholic Worker movement, and, unlike Ryan and the German-Americans of the Central-Verein, based his social ethics not on reason but on faith and the Scriptures (thus following 1 Cor. 7:31, one should avoid dishonorable vocations, such as working as a stockbroker); but today his notion of "Catholic sociology," where the major of a syllogism is provided by the church and the minor by empirical research, may strike us as quaint, and his "personalist" emphasis on voluntary poverty and charity as solutions to economic and racial problems neglects the need to establish social justice through law. Furthermore, Curran observes, the Catholic Worker movement has an awe-inspiring spiritual beauty; but, concentrating on derelicts, it has done little or nothing to help the ghetto poor.

John Courtney Murray's creative genius made him the most outstanding American Catholic theologian of the century; but he was a Cold War economic conservative whose clever solution to the church-state issue — arguing that papal pronouncements condemning religious freedom were historically conditioned and thus subject to "development" (change) — was sometimes more clever than exact. And, as Curran begins his chapter on the Catholic peace movement, "No sooner had John Courtney Murray proved there was no incompatibility be-



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tween being American and being Catholic than the Berrigan brothers and their cohorts came to almost the opposite conclusion."

In a long *Horizons* (Fall 1982) symposium, Rodger Van Allen, John A. Coleman, S.J., June E. O'Connor, George G. Higgins, and David J. O'Brien pay generous but critical tribute to Curran's book; as Coleman says, he has written a "valuable and important book." But, perhaps because he is the prisoner of the old "manual" theology that trained him and of the moralist's method of weighing every position systematically in order to achieve a proper balance between the "natural" and "supernatural" response, Curran does not write with a felicitous style. Much of the book is dull — duller than it has to be. And his editors have not helped by missing several typos, leaving out words between pages 27 and 28, and leaving in some "hopefullys" when he means, "I hope." While he tells us more than we want or need to know about the thought of his subjects, we would love to know more about the men themselves and how their life experiences — particularly their economic backgrounds, reading, and educations — accounted for the development of their thought.

Furfey, for one, is still alive in Washington and Curran says in *Horizons* that he has known him for fifteen years; but little of this colorful man's personal complexity comes through. And we should know more about how Murray both transcended and suffered from the limitations of a doctorate from the Gregorian Univeristy. Since he based part of his foreign policy on his analysis of the Russian mind, how well trained was he in foreign affairs? Curran wisely questions Murray's bold assertion that the Ameri-

REVIEWERS

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can consensus is ultimately grounded on natural law; but we are left wondering how widely Murray searched elsewhere in American culture for the consensus.

Indeed, one of the striking things about Curran's history is how isolated some of these theologians, with a few exceptions, have been from the main currents of American intellectual life—from Protestant theology, Puritanism, the Social Gospel, revivalism, the Niebuhrs, as well as Emerson, Thoreau, James, Dewey, and secular humanism. This when so many of the new challenges to Christian morality are emerging from the "success" of the culture itself, from consumerism, from the "good life" strangling the life of the spirit.

In contrast, Shinn's method springs from a dialogue with the traditions and the disciplines which Catholic intellectuals, until the 1960s, neglected. His chapter on world hunger, for example, documents the extent of starvation, deals with conflicting evidence, analyzes the role of food in religious values and rituals, allows for cultural differences in attitude toward food, connects hunger with the energy and population problems, explains the technical and social advantages and disadvantages of the Green Revolution, and prudently answers those who argue that their giving up a juicy steak won't help a starving child in India:

> I repeat that changed lifestyles, isolated from a larger political strategy, accomplish little. Yet they have a purpose. Those who adopt simpler diets may be useful pioneers, showing more timid people that life can be enjoyable without lavish consumption.

Today, as the bishops' letter on nuclear armaments demonstrates, Catholic moralists are both in dialogue with technology and constantly feeling for that balance which Curran sees as central to a moral decision. American Catholic social ethics is coming of age, even if it it not—nor should it be— completely at home.

Theology & ways of knowing

DISCERNING THE MYSTERY

AN ESSAY ON THE NATURE OF THEOLOGY

Andrew Louth

Clarendon/Oxford, $19.95, 147 pp.

Nell Gifford

"THE FUNDAMENTAL thing that Christian theology can contribute as one way of pursuing knowledge, to all other ways of pursuing knowledge is . . . 'that it should hinder and resist the natural craving of the human spirit for a clear transparent and definite system.'"

This is a work of theological epistemology. As such it belongs to that growing body of post-critical, post-systems studies of theological anthropology to which Karl Rahner is the most prolific contributor. Like Rahner, Louth is versed in patristics: his most recent previous book, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition, From Plato to Denys* (Clarendon, 1981), was a systematic and rigorous introduction to the major Greek concepts that wended through and were transformed in the course of creedal development and the establishment of liturgical and mystical *praxis*. Those foundations, of classical Christian anthropology freshly realized, support this present book.

The title turns on Gabriel Marcel's distinction between a mystery and a problem, mystery being essentially irreducible, while problems submit (*sub specie aeternitatis*, at least) to methods productive of solutions. The Enlightenment's systematic "dissociation of sensibility" implied (however accurate its understanding of its methodological heritage from Descartes) that even the questions of philosophy, including ontology, were amenable to "method," were in fact "problems." Most recognize Immanuel Kant as the one who worked out that implication at the expense of the notion of philosophy itself.

Louth goes to this root assumption by imaginative and engaging routes, beginning with a temperate but unsparing analysis of the evolution of the opposition between reason and will, emotion and thought, sense and cognition, and the corresponding determination to master the intractable and contingent by means of method. "Method" contrasts with *techne* as, paradigmatically, mathematics does with art. One is repeatable, universalizable within a system intentionally independent of the accidental, including the individual practitioner. The other depends precisely on unique conjunctions of accidents, is unrepeatable and therefore untestable. One can be said to "progress"; the other only by the most

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attenuated metaphor advances. The elevation of "method" as privileged access to truth was generally completed in the Enlightenment, and persists.

There is a history of dissent from this heritage, beginning with Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), including the English and German Romantics, and extended by German hermeneutic philosophers such as Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911). Too often, however, these philosophical, apologetic, and literary attempts to reintroduce the qualitative as participant in the life of the mind have shared in the assumption that feeling and thought, sense and knowledge, could be separated. In either-or debates, the subjective tends to lose.

Louth takes the more modern route: perception and understanding are active processes in which subject and object can be distinguished but not divided. The relations, between subject and object and within each, display something like a reciprocity, or mutual necessity, that can be more adequately expressed as "both-and" rather than "either-or." There do not exist, out there, opposing kinds of truth, but rather different kinds of questions, spheres of inquiry, modes of approach. Inwardly as well, the person — though it may be articulated into "faculties" of reason, emotion, will— *functions* as a substantial unity in every act of perception or understanding. The issue is not method *per se*, but two assumptions: first, that all matters are amenable to a problem/method approach, and second, that the kind of knowledge we gain by such an approach is privileged.

The issue is an ancient one, rendered a conundrum by our captivity to the senses. What is the value of information that we gain via the senses (which are notoriously unreliable)? We gain information in no other way. That is why epistemology, theological or otherwise, always entails ontology (theological anthropology). Louth's imaginative contribution is to engage both the early church Fathers and our contemporaries, Michael Polanyi and Hans-Georg Gadamer, in an analysis of the essential characteristics of human ways of learning. Fundamentally, we are dependent on memory and anticipation in every act of perception. The senses cannot be separated from our need, as it were, to "make sense." Further, we inherit conventions of thought and expression that render thought and expression possible. The patterns displayed in the maintenance and transmission of human culture are patterns of interdependency, temporal and spatial. In these patterns Louth finds a grammar of human application to the world in which the individual is no mere *tabula rasa* and some proper irreducibility of both inner and outer is displayed.

Louth comes out at Newman, the *Grammar of Assent*, with a phenomenology of understanding-in-general: "Against the idea of a method that anyone may, in principle, use to attain truth, Newman points to something less easy to define, something learnt by example, something rather like skill or a developed insight or sensitivity working through sympathy. . . ." To claim that such an approach may characterize *all* learning—a very maintainable claim in light of contemporary psychology and physiology of perception—is not simply

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to go behind the Enlightenment, but to call attention to a capacity that even Kant, with some persuasion, might have valued. In recovering the distinction between qualities of objects, between what can be resolved methodically and what is irreducible, we recover respect and humility. Both are not only theological but scholarly virtues.

I found Louth's book valuable both for its accomplishments—his conjunctions of Gadamer, Polanyi, and the Fathers made exegetical sense of what is often only a passing thrill, or hunch—and for his tone. "Science" is not the problem. The Enlightenment is not exactly the problem. He does not engage in apologetic battles to prove that the "way" of the humanities is superior to that of the sciences, or inherently the same, or somehow more durable. With a post-apocalyptic ease reminiscent of the Fathers themselves, he thinks aloud about who we are. Proceeding from our givenness, he demonstrates that ways of knowing find their unity not in method but in human existence, in what Rahner would probably call "the substantial unity of the human person," a fine and fitting completion of Kant's critical turn. His application of this approach to the question of theological method supplies a reliable and, I think, durable structure in which reflection on and practice of faith necessarily combine.

Church/world watch

(Continued from page 41)

for the United States, but a test of diplomatic skill. The first step in reemphasizing the diplomatic dimension is to distinguish desirable and feasible policy objectives in Lebanon. Using U.S. troops to provide political and moral support on an interim basis for a feeble central government in Lebanon has not been unreasonable or undesirable. But it no longer seems feasible; the costs of an exposed Marine contingent grow daily, and continuation of present trends will involve the United States more deeply militarily and will dissipate diplomatic possibilities.

If Lebanon can be saved, the U.S. contribution is primarily diplomatic. If Lebanon is to be saved, it must be done within the context of a convergence of interest among Israel, the Arab states, and U.S. action in the region. The need of the moment is not more U.S. troops but some new U.S. ideas.

J. BRYAN HEHIR

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Correspondence

(Continued from page 34)

Miss Gordon has done an excellent job conveying this idea. J. PHILLIPS

Wanted abortions

Beaumont, Tex.

To the Editors: I have a few comments regarding Mary Beth Gordon's article "Nobody Wants An Abortion" (Oct. 12). If the title, admittedly in quotes, expresses the main idea of the article, it appears manifestly untrue.

A lot of people want abortions, including the woman in the article. That is what her decision means. The doctor, nurse, and clinic personnel decided to go into the abortion business; they obviously want abortions. The banks and lending institutions financing the venture obviously want the abortion business to succeed. . . . This requires a certain volume of customers. People fearful of the high cost of welfare or the growth of impoverished minorities prefer abortion to increased taxation for sundry child care programs. In many cases, the fathers appear to want abortions. And again, the pregnant woman wants the abortion.

Wanting the abortion and not wanting the child appears to involve the same choice. Attempts to justify the abortion on the grounds that the child is unwanted appear tautological. It would seem that the victim of private violence is always unwanted, or force would not be directed to eliminate them. Further, the deciders want the power to abort the child without the law, society, religion, or morality asserting any countervailing right of the child to be.

What is really wanted is a recognition of the value, the good of the human life destroyed. That want is a great want, and will not be filled by a letter to *Commonweal*, nor by a statute. At best, a letter or a statute may serve to assert the value of the unwanted life, and perhaps to preserve it. A vision of the innocent forgiving their mothers and others for killing them might do more, but I cannot provide it. I hope there is one who can and who will. J. MARTIN GREEN

Taint so

Walnut Creek, Calif.

To the Editors: Re yours of 18 Nov., I merely shook my head over the usual "elegaic" for *elegiac* (p.631). I marveled at your insistence on spelling *Scowcroft* "Snowcroft" (p. 614) (as you had done in a previous issue), and I only chuckled over "honored in the breech" (p. 611) — meaning "kicked upstairs"?

But — I'm baffled by the next line (611): "Nonetheless, peace and our own security remain served by the taint that still attaches . . . " If you'd said that peace and security remain tainted, I'd have understood, but "served by the taint"? LEON LUKASZEWSKI

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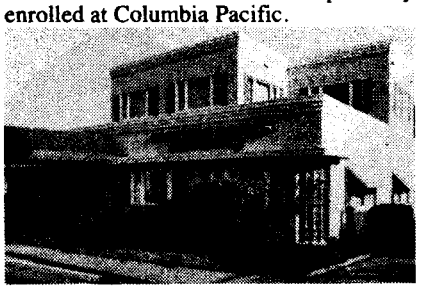

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